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THE

KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST

CONSIDERED

IN HIS MYSTERIES,

IN HIS CONNECTION WITH GOD HIS FATHER, WITH CREATURES IN GENERAL, WITH MEN IN PARTICULAR, AND WITH THE BLESSED IN HEAVEN; WITH AN EJACULATION ON EACH OF THE MYSTERIES, AND ON EACH OF THE QUALITIES OF JESUS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

WHILST travelling in France, I fortunately received from a very learned and holy ecclesiastic the work of which the following is a translation. I read the book with great care, and was astonished at the deep and varied theological and scriptural knowledge so often cropping up as I read along. I frequently felt emotions of divine love and of penitential regret, as well over the holy unction of the author's words, and the pious sentiments visible on almost every page of his learned and remarkable book; and hence I conceived the idea of giving it to the public in an English dress, because I felt that such a consummation would give considerable honour to God, and would much instruct and edify all who would be fortunate enough to read it. I saw, likewise, how well calculated it was to make the perfect cling to, and glory in, their happy state; how able it was, with God's grace, to make those who yearned after perfection hurry on to embrace the object of their aspirations; and, above all, how potent it would prove to aid the tepid and the wanderer to arise from their sinful dreams, to labour for the one thing necessary, and to return to the good God they had abandoned. But, dreading my inability and weak judgment in so important an undertaking, I consulted some of the most holy and learned priests in France and elsewhere who had read the book, and every one of them gave it his unbounded praise and best admiration, and each of them expressed an ardent wish to see it in the hands of every Christian; and, besides, they assured me that if I rendered it into English I would do a great

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service to religion, a great good to my own soul, and a lasting benefit to the souls of all who would read it. Emboldened by such learned and sage counsel, I undertook the labour of love, and now, thank God, I have finished it. I wish, however, that abler hands than mine had accomplished the work; but I know that when the reader has perused a single chapter of this valuable book and its accompanying ejaculation, he will cheerfully pardon the rough garb and other defects visible, I fear, in this translation to the intellectual and tasteful reader. The original French work was compiled from the unpublished papers of a French priest, who kept his name and his fame hidden and unknown to this world, and who was as distinguished for his great learning as he was remarkable for his great humility, his untiring zeal, and his universal charity, and other virtues. He was often called to high rank in the Church, but he preferred to spend the forty years of his ministry teaching and preaching the Word of God in his native city, in order to bring all to Him who redeemed them. The original work was approved by many bishops and learned doctors, and went through several editions, and hence it is needless for me to give any detailed description of its worth, particularly as I feel that a single glance over the index or contents will demonstrate to the reader, much better than I can, its great value and usefulness.

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THE

KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST

CONSIDERED IN

HIS MYSTERIES AND IN HIS DIFFERENT QUALITIES OR CONNEXIONS WITH GOD HIS FATHER, WITH CREATURES IN GENERAL, AND WITH MEN IN THEIR DIFFERENT STATES.

A PRELIMINARY INSTRUCTION

ON THE NECESSITY OF KNOWING JESUS, OF BELIEVING IN HIM, AND THE REASONS WHY HE DELAYED HIS COMING INTO THE WORLD.

Is the knowledge of Christ necessary for man?

It is so necessary, since the fall of our first parents, that no one, whether Jew or Gentile, can be saved without it. It will not suffice to gain eternal life to know and confess that there is one God, the Creator, the Master, and the Sovereign Lord of all things; that He is the one and only God, to whom we ought to direct all our being, and whom we ought to adore and love with a supreme love; because it is necessary to know His Son, Jesus Christ also, whom the Father had sent into the world "in order that those who believe in Him may not perish, but that they may have eternal life."[1]

What are the principal passages in the Sacred Scriptures which prove that man cannot be saved without faith in Jesus Christ?

Amongst all the passages which could be cited, there is not one more to the point than that from St. Peter whilst preaching to the Jews, and reproaching them for having rejected Jesus Christ, the corner stone. "Neither is there," said he, "salvation in any other name; for there is no other name under heaven given to man whereby he must be saved."[2] Consequently, there was no grace or means of salvation before the law, nor under the law, nor is there in the kingdom of the new law, save through Jesus Christ, and through Him alone. Scarcely was man, the masterpiece of God's hands, created

[1] John, iii. 15. [2] Acts, iv. 12.

in a state of innocence, when he fell into sin, and God, touched at the unhappy condition into which his fall had plunged him, made known this Divine Mediator to him, saying that "the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head." Alas, how deep would be man's despair, seeing, as he should, the enormity and the terrible consequences of the sin he had committed, if God had not revealed to him that he could obtain pardon by believing in Jesus Christ. And if Adam wept and laboured for more than 900 years afterwards, it was only in the hope and faith which he had of being reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ.

Could it be proved that this knowledge and faith in Christ was a constant tradition amongst the Jews?

It can; for Adam taught it to his children, and was most happy if all of them would make use of this knowledge. Abraham "saw this day and was glad."[1] And God said to this holy patriarch, "all nations will be blessed in Him who was to come from his race,"[2] and Abraham made known this knowledge to his children. The same promise was made known to Isaac and to Jacob, and Jacob, when blessing Juda, said to him that, "the sceptre would not be taken away from Juda, nor a prince from his posterity, until He, who was to be sent, would come—He who was the expected of nations."[3] Moses knew it, because St. Paul says that "the ignominy of Christ was a greater treasure than all the riches of Egypt."[4] Our Redeemer Himself tells the "Jews that Moses had written of Him, and that if they consulted the Scriptures they would find that they bore evidence of Him."[5] The prophets who followed after Moses spoke of Him in a far clearer manner. "A virgin," says Isaias, "will conceive, and she will bring forth a son who will be called God with us."[6] All the saints who lived before the old law, and under it, died in the faith of this coming Liberator, "not having received the blessings which God had promised them; but only seeing them and saluting them far away in the distance."[7] It would be vain for men to seek any other means to re-unite them to God, from whom they were separated; because they could never be reconciled to God, nor could they come near to Him, but through the ministry of the man-God, for, says the Redeemer, "no one can come to the Father, but by me."[8] The salvation and the life of man consisted, before the coming of Christ, in the faith, the hope, and the expectation of this Liberator, who was to be sent to them. All the law related to Christ, and regarded Him alone:

[1] John, viii. 56. [2] Gen. xxi. 18. [3] Gen. xlix. 10. [4] Heb. xi. 26.
[5] John, v. 39. [6] Isaias, vii. 14. [7] Heb. xi. 13. [8] John, xiv. 6.

for, says St. Paul, "Christ is the end of the law for the salvation of all those who believe in him."[1] Those Jews, who were Christians in advance, saw only Jesus Christ in all their ceremonies, and it was through Him, and through His merits, that they offered their prayers and sacrifices; and hence St. Augustine said that the law was, as it were, pregnant of the coming Redeemer. The law prefigured and promised Him, but it did not give Him; and hence St. Augustine says that all that is hidden in the Sacred Scriptures is Jesus Christ, who is concealed in them, and all that is discovered in them is Christ, whom they discover. Therefore, it is Christ alone that we are to seek in the Old and the New Law, and when we have found Him we shall have found Him "in whom all the treasures of wisdom and science are contained."[2] Everywhere, says St. Bernard, that I do not find Jesus, all is insipid; because nothing pleases me but Jesus.

But why did not the Jews, who were expecting the Redeemer, know Him when He came into the world?

Very few of the Jews, it is true, knew Christ when He came into the world; but the reasons for this are not difficult to be found.

The first is that which St. Paul states when he says that "they not knowing the justice of God, and seeking to establish their own, have not submitted themselves to the justice of God."[3] This is the true principle of their opposition to the doctrine of Christ. They wished to be just, and they ran, says St. Paul, after justice; but, full of confidence in themselves, they expected Him through their own efforts, from their own will; and hence a Mediator opposed to their pride, who announced a justice of a superior order, a justice from God, a justice which He alone could give, was repugnant to them. The origin of their incredulity and reprobation was that they refused to go to God through Jesus Christ, and hence, by a terrible and just judgment, they were rejected, in order that the plenitude of nations should take their place.

If they had known Him, says St. Paul, they would not have crucified Him; and yet what happened had been arranged according to the designs of Divine Providence. What a terrible punishment for all those who, like the Jews, love darkness rather than the light which could enlighten them.

The Jews would not know Christ when He appeared in a state of humiliation amongst them; because they expected the Messiah in the majesty and grandeur of a great king, and because they took the second coming of Christ, which is to be in great power and grandeur,

[1] Rom. x. 14. [2] Colos. ii. 3. [3] Rom. x. 3.

for the first, which, according to the prophets, was to be in humiliation. This is why they were scandalized at the poverty and humility of Christ; because they were attached to the goods of this world, and their hearts were full of ambition.

They did not know Christ, because they were too much occupied with the external ceremonies of their religion, and because they knew not the spirit of their faith. This is the reason why the Pharisees roused the people against Him; because He condemned their superstition and absurd scrupulosity in certain unimportant things, while neglecting, at the same time, things of great consideration in the law. How many Christians do we not see who know not Christ; because they deliver themselves up to a multitude of external practices, and neglect the knowledge of Christ, which is essential to religion, and the chief point of all.

A still further reason for the incredulity of the Jewish nation, is that the multitude allowed itself to be led along by its chiefs, its priests, and the Pharisees; and not having identical interests they easily espoused the prejudices of those leaders. The priests and the Pharisees were the personal enemies of the glory and the virtues of Jesus; because they believed that these obscured their own. They pretended to hold the key of science, and to be masters and models for others in the affair of religion and piety, and hence they were embittered against Jesus on account of his irreproachable reputation, and the pungent and well-deserved reproaches He administered to them. The proofs which God gave, through many miracles, of His power and divinity, served only to inflame their hearts with hatred, like Cain against the innocent Abel. The more pure His justice was, the more unbearable it became to them, and the more they burned with envy and melancholy; and hence they roused all the people against Him, and the people, thus seduced by their authority, and lapsing into their prejudices, regarded our Redeemer as a seducer of the people, and hence declared themselves against him.

What reasons could be given to prove that the knowledge of Jesus is necessary for all men in order to be saved?

The first reason is given by St. Paul when he said to the Romans that "there were two men—the first was Adam, the principle of death; the second was Christ, the principle of life; and as by one man's sin all have perished, so also by the justice of one all have received justification and life;"[1] and hence it follows that as soon as men became sinners they could be justified only through the merits and faith

[1] Rom. v. 8.

in Christ, who became Himself our justice and our sanctification; and, therefore, as by one man we became sinners, so by one man, the man-God, we became just.

The second reason is, that if men could be justified, and obtain the remission of their sins without Christ, or if they could do so now, they would be able to do so either by the natural power of their free will, or by a knowledge of the law, or by sacrifices; but none of these could conduct a man to justice or to salvation.

Alas! what could a man do without Christ, who says "without me you can do nothing."[1] Oh, unfortunate weakness, impotent will, all your power is only a vain presumption. Behold into what crimes the philosophers have fallen, because they depended on their natural strength. They knew God; but they did not glorify Him as they ought, because they could not do so without Christ, whom they knew not.[2] The law did not justify, although it was presumed by men, before the law of Moses, that it did. They believed, says St. Augustine, that they fulfilled the law because they knew it; but because they knew it they were more culpable in transgressing it. The law, says St. Paul, "gives only a knowledge of sin," and it is only by the grace of God we can fulfil it; and as to sacrifices, says he, "it is impossible to wash out sins by the blood of oxen and goats."[3] It is only by the blood of Christ, who is the victim of propitiation for our sins, that sin can be abolished. To practise the works of the law is not more powerful; because St. Paul proves in almost every one of his epistles that the works of the law do not justify, but faith in Christ that worketh by charity. One can appear just to the eyes of man by external works; but one cannot appear so before God, if faith and charity do not operate in him; and hence we must conclude that there is no salvation in any other than through Jesus Christ, and St. Augustine confirms this where he teaches that none of the ancient just could be justified, or purified from their sins, without faith in the incarnation, the death, and resurrection of Christ. This, says he, is a truth which religion does not permit us to doubt. O my Divine Jesus, how just it is that all men must find in you the principle, the source, and the plenitude of all justice and all grace.

Is the state of those who know not Jesus very unfortunate?

The eyes of faith could not behold anything more terrible or more frightful than the state of those who live without the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and St. Paul gives us a fearful picture of it when

[1] John, xv. 5. [2] Rom. i. 2. [3] Heb. x. 4.

he says, "they walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding obscured with darkness, alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance which is in them, caused by the blindness of their hearts; who despairing gave themselves up to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness unto covetousness."[1] Could any state be more unfortunate than this? and yet it is the state of all pagans and carnal Jews; and would to God it were not the state of the majority of this world. The world does not know Christ, and this is why it is corrupted in all its ways, and the object of God's hatred as well.

Why does not this world know Christ, after all He has said and done to make Himself known?

The world could not know Christ because it is opposed to Him in spirit and in heart. The spirit of worldlings is occupied with vain and useless things; they live in continual dissipation and distraction, and never reflect on this grand object. The worldling and the animal man are identical, and neither know how to distinguish the things of God. The world does not want to know Jesus, because His life and doctrine condemn its maxims—it flies from the light, because it does not wish to know anything calculated to disturb the false peace which it finds in the love of creatures.

God reveals and makes known His Son to humble souls only, and the world is nothing but pride. "I give Thee thanks, my Father," says our Redeemer, "because Thou hast hidden those things from the wise of this world, and revealed them to the humble and the little ones."[2] Again, in the gospel of St. John, our Redeemer says, that "those to whom He spoke could not believe, because they sought the glory and the esteem of men." Unhappy world, accursed pride, which will not allow Jesus to be known, who is the only object of our peace and our happiness.

What benefits can we find in the knowledge of Jesus?

We can find the grandest and most inestimable benefits in it; because when the knowledge of Christ is once graven on our hearts, it is sufficient to banish from them error, doubt, superstition, vice, and even death; and it establishes, in their stead, truth, peace, joy, sanctity, life, and salvation. St. Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, not only glories in knowing Christ, but in Him crucified; and this is the doctrine he preaches to idolators and to all other peoples, even though it was a scandal to the Jews and a folly to the Gentiles. In this mystery he found the power, the strength, and the

[1] Ephes. iv. 17, 18, 19. [2] Matt. xi. 25; v. 44.

wisdom of God; for it is an inexhaustible treasure, from which he derived all the instruction necessary for the conversion of infidels, to confirm those already believing, to console the afflicted, and to bring back those who had strayed away; there he found the materials to confound pagan philosophy, to humble the presumption of the Jews, to instruct the ignorant, and overthrow the learned; and it was through this knowledge he reformed the abuses which had crept into the Church. He always placed Christ crucified in the front, and as the rising sun dissipates the shades and mists of morning from the earth's surface, so also when Christ the Sun of Justice appears in our hearts, and diffuses over them the riches of His Divine light, then error disappears, false devotion is demolished, crime is driven from its stronghold, and what the royal prophet sung is realized:—"God arises and his enemies were put to flight."[1]

Are these the only benefits to be found in the knowledge of Christ?

There are many other benefits gained through this knowledge which are noted in the gospel and in the holy fathers. He who knows Jesus knows how grand God is, because he knows that God has a man-God to adore Him and to be His victim; he knows the manner, and with what sanctity Christ wishes to be served, and when once he knows Christ, he knows the depth of man's corruption, and he knows that it could be repaired only by the death of a man-God, and it is only then he can comprehend that true wisdom which comes from faith in Christ. The just and sinners find boundless blessings in this knowledge; because, if the sinner saw the enormity of his crimes, and the eternal punishment he has justly merited, nothing could prevent him from plunging into despair; but he finds a mediator in Jesus, who, through the merits of His sufferings, can procure him peace, and reconcile him to God. It is through the blood of Jesus that he has access to the Father, that he enters into the holy sanctuary, and that he is re-established in his original rights. Poor sinners, wandering in the ways of iniquity, have need of a road to return to God; because, being filled with error, illusion, and lying, it is necessary for them to seek the truth, and being reduced at last to a state of death, they ought to desire life, and Christ Himself will come out to them, saying: "I am the way, the truth, and the life."[2] If we only knew Christ, our thoughts of despair would cease, even though our crimes were much greater than they are. Confidence would return to our hearts, and we would see that no

[1] Psalm xvii. 2. [2] John, xiv. 6.

crime could hold its place against the power of this Divine Saviour. If we believe in Him, hell will be conquered, the devil chained down, the influence of this world destroyed, the passions subdued, grace would become mistress of our hearts, and sinners, through this knowledge of Christ, would possess a model of penance which they should constantly imitate, in order to make themselves truly pleasing to God. Through this knowledge, the sinner will see a God in sorrow and in tears, who will teach him to weep away his sins; he will see a God who has borne the shame and the weight of our sins, who has deprived Himself of the comforts and consolations of life, who had not whereon to repose His head, and who teaches that a true penitent ought to spend his life in penitential sorrow, mortification, and regret, if he desire to obtain the remission of his sins, and to gain eternal happiness.

When a sinner has been justified, he should never forget the God who made him so; but he should rather labour the more to know Him in a much more intimate manner.

How great would be our ingratitude if, after having been received into grace by God, we should forget Him from whom we received so many benefits, and "if we became just, it was," says St. Paul, "because Jesus became our justice, our sanctification, and our redemption."[1] We are nothing in the order of grace, except through Jesus Christ, that is through His mediation, which unites us to God; through His merits, which are applied to us; through His priesthood, which offers and consecrates us to God; and through His sacrifice, which purifies and sanctifies us. In Jesus we are united to God as His children, as spouses to their husbands, as members to their head, as vine-twigs to the vine. In a word, we are nothing but for Christ; that is to form His Church, which is His body, to accomplish His designs, to glorify Him, to recall and to renew His virtues, and His mysteries, in this sublime body destined to adore Him through all eternity. Without Jesus we cannot have any solid piety; because He is the foundation, the soul, and the principle of it; and hence all piety which is not animated with the spirit of Christ, which does not rest upon Him, and which is not intimately connected with Him, cannot be solid and true; and this is why St. Paul writes to Timothy: "They have indeed the appearance of piety, but they deny its power."[2] Christ is the plenitude of the law, and without Him all the works of the law, and all its ceremonies, are as a vapour. And St. Paul, writing to the Philippians,

[1] 1 Cor. i. 30. [2] 2 Tim. iii. 5.

says: "Furthermore, I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and I count them as dung, that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having my justice which is of the law, but that which is of the faith of Jesus Christ which is of God, justice in faith."[1] Let us, therefore, regard all our devotions as, in the same way, lost, which have not Jesus for their principle, and which are not fashioned and animated by His Spirit. Without Jesus all our devotions and practices of piety will be as mere Jewish devotions; because in him all should end, as the centre of the Old and the New Law, and as the author and the consummator of the faith. In fine, says St. Ambrose, that which ought to attach us strongly to Jesus, is when we find ourselves all in Jesus, and when Jesus is all in us. If we desire to be healed from the wounds which sin and the devil had made upon our souls, Christ is our physician; when we find ourselves overwhelmed with the load of our iniquities, He is our justice and our sanctification, and when we are in need of powerful aid, He is the strength, the power, and the arm of God. If we fear death, He is our resurrection and our life; if our souls be hungry or thirsty, He is the living bread to satiate us; if we yearn for heaven, the inheritance of true Christians, He is the way that conducts us there. Yes, it is in Jesus, as in an inexhaustible treasure, that we will find everything necessary for the present and the future; and oh! what a misfortune if we do not profit by this great gift which God has given to us.

Is it not true that the most part of the crimes prevalent amongst us arises from our ignorance of Jesus, and this is why the prophet Osee said to the Jews that "neither the truth nor the knowledge of God was upon this earth; and that cursing, and lying, and killing, and theft, and adultery, have overflowed the land."[2] What do we see in this world, but a profound ignorance and a thorough contempt for religion! All the earth seems conspiring to demolish it; the Jews are not able to comprehend it; pagans mock at it; the most part of mankind tramples upon it and persecutes it in its mysteries, its sacraments, and its virtues; and wicked Catholics profane and abuse it. The avaricious persecute Christ in His poverty; the proud, in His humility; and the voluptuous, in His sufferings and in His cross. We see living Antichrists everywhere around us, and hence St. John says, "little children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that Antichrist cometh, even now there are become many

[1] Philippians, iii. 8, 9. [2] Osee, iv. 1, 2.

Antichrists,"[1] who confess Christ with their lips and deny Him with their works. No, we do not know Jesus; we talk favourably of Him, we wish to know Him only in His glory and not in His humiliations; His lowliness and His sufferings frighten us, because they are a reproach to our worldliness and effeminacy. We do not want these, because our lives are contrary to His. Therefore, let us learn to know Him in His lowliness as well as in His triumphs, and then His glories will reveal our hope, and His lowliness will point out the way to true happiness.

As the knowledge of Christ was so necessary to man, why did God delay so long to make Him known to us, and why did He delay sending Him for four thousand years? Would it not appear much more reasonable and merciful to have sent Him immediately on the fall of Adam?

God, whose thoughts and views are infinitely above those of man, always acts with admirable wisdom; for He knows the reasons of His conduct, which must be always just, and incomprehensible to us. When God has done a thing, it should be sufficient to make us believe it; and because He did it, it must be properly done, and not too late, nor different from the manner He intended to do it. And although we do not see all the reasons God has had in delaying so long to send His Son into this world, we can, however, fathom some of His reasons for so acting by following the opinion of St. Augustine.

The first reason is to make men sensible of the necessity of a liberator to emancipate them from their miseries, and hence it became, in a certain sense, necessary that sin should more and more abound, and that thus men should feel their own weakness; and being thus convinced of their impotence, they would gladly seek a remedy in the Messiah, who had been promised to them, and who alone could withdraw them from the state of corruption into which their passions had plunged them.

The second reason is that God made use of this delay in order that all the promises, figures, and prophecies which were to precede the coming of His Son should be fulfilled, in order to prove His future Incarnation; because, if the Son of God had come into the world immediately after the promise made to Adam, people would have more grounds to doubt of His coming at all; but when we see the numerous figures and prophecies clearly predicting and foreshadowing His coming, we can have no real doubt of His having already come into the world.

[1] 1 John, ii. 18.

The third reason is that the Incarnation was a benefit so great, and so much above all human calculation, that it was necessary to prepare man for it by a delay of so many years, and therefore we can easily understand that all the ceremonies of the ancient law, and all that was great and remarkable in the records of the Old Testament, were so many preparations to usher in this grand, this ineffable mystery of a God about to become man, and to become the Redeemer and the Saviour of the world, and hence such a benefit could not be too long expected or longed for.

Are we therefore obliged to believe that the Messiah has come, that the Jews expect Him in vain, and that Christ is the real and long-expected Messiah ?

If we did not believe that the Messiah has come, and that Jesus, the Son of Mary, who was born at Bethlehem, is the Messiah, we would be in the same sad condition as the Jews. How could we doubt in His coming, when we see that the time marked out for it by the prophets has passed, and that all the prophecies have been accomplished in Him. Jacob predicted that the sceptre would not be taken away from Juda, and that there would always be a chief of the Jewish nation to rule them, up to the time that the expected of nations would come into the world. And just at the very time that Christ came into the world, the Jews submitted to the Romans; that Herod the Idumean became their king; and that they said to Pilate that they would have nothing but Cæsar. The Prophet Daniel foretold, in his captivity at Babylon, that Christ would come at the end of sixty and ten weeks of years, that is, at the end of 490 of our years. Now, if we count from the thirty-second year of the reign of King Assuerus, when the edict was issued to rebuild the temple and city of Jerusalem, demolished by order of King Nebuchodonosor, we will find that Christ was put to death in the midst of the seventy weeks of years above mentioned, that He was rejected by His own people, that He rejected them, that the temple and the city would be entirely ruined, that the Jews would see before all this the abomination of desolation in the holy place, and that then this people would be reduced to extreme ruin and destruction. Could anyone read a clearer prophecy than this, or one which could more significantly mark the exact coming of the expected Messiah ? And what renders this prophecy so remarkable is that, after the lapse of nearly nineteen centuries, the Jews are still dispersed all over the world, and still without a temple or a sacrifice. The Prophet Aggeus characterises the advent of the Messiah by sensible signs and brilliant

events, and makes us clearly see that the time of our Redeemer's coming has passed, and that therefore he has long since come into this world. Behold, says he, what the Lord of armies says, and "yet a little time and I will move the heavens and the earth, the sea and the land. I will move all nations, and the desire of all nations will come, and will fill the house with glory."[1] This little time is passed, and the Messiah, the object of the people's desires, has come. All the earth has been in motion at his birth, by the general census then made throughout the Roman empire, and He filled the temple with glory by His presence and by the great miracles He performed. In a word, the prophets predicted so clearly the mysteries of Jesus, His life, and the circumstances which accompanied it, that we can no longer doubt this truth. Should not all this make our faith firm and immovable, and inspire us with an inviolable attachment to Jesus, our Redeemer, and to the doctrines which he has taught us?

EJACULATION TO JESUS ON THE HAPPINESS OF KNOWING HIM.

My Lord Jesus Christ, you have been such a long time with us, and yet I have not known you! Is it possible that I passed a part of my life without knowing you? I confess with shame and sorrow that I employed myself only in vain and useless things, which occupy my mind, and fill it with the foolish phantoms of human knowledge, and which, far from enlightening my soul, and satisfying my heart, are useful only to make me more vain. What can anyone know who knows not you, my Lord Jesus; for all the treasures of wisdom and science are dwelling in you. Are not you the entire truth, and the light of all souls? Could I be happy without knowing you, since, as you have taught, eternal life consists in knowing you and your Father, who sent you into this world, in order that those who believe in you may not perish, but may have life eternal.

The prophets, whom you sent into this world to be the heralds and the precursors of your coming, made it their sweetest occupation to study what you discovered to them regarding your mysteries, and they made it their delight to announce them to men, to represent them in their actions, and to be, as it were, living pictures of them. The patriarchs and the ancient just longed for the time of your manifestation; they ardently desired your day, and their consolation was to contemplate and to welcome in the distance the promised bless-

[1] Aggeus, ii. 7, 8.

ings, which were to be the fruit of your mysteries. What a subject of shame and confusion for me, that I occupied myself so little with those mysteries, that I had so little fervour and zeal to study your divine instructions and the edifying example of your life, in order to feed and nourish my soul with them.

Grant, O my divine Jesus, that these mysteries may be for the future my only study and delight; grant that all my time may be employed to know you, and to make you known to the whole world—a world which does not know you, which is hostile to your name, to your maxims, and to your disciples. Grant that all sinners may know you as the only one in whom they can find the remission of their sins, the sanctification of their souls, their reconciliation with your Father, and their eternal salvation. May the just know you as their author and the principle of all justice, as the foundation and grand object of their piety and devotion. I flatter myself in vain, O my amiable Saviour, with knowing you if I do not love you, and if this love does not make me live for you, and obey the precepts of your holy gospel.

O my Jesus, may we all regard you as the model to which we must be conformable, if we desire to be saved. No, dear Lord, I desire nothing more on this earth than to be able to say with St. Paul that I know nothing else than Christ Jesus, and Him crucified. In this knowledge I will find all my religion, all my hope, all my strength in weakness, all my peace in troubles, my consolation in suffering, my confidence in adversity, victory in all my combats, a remedy for all evils, light in my darkness, my whole resource in death, and, after it, everlasting rest. Amen.

THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS CHRIST.

WHAT are the principal mysteries of Jesus Christ?

The principal mysteries of Jesus, after His Incarnation and Birth, may be divided into three classes, according to the different epochs of His life; the first are those which he worked up to the twelfth year of His age; the second are those which He has accomplished after that age and up to his death; and the third are those which have happened from His death to His Ascension, and on to the descent of the Holy Ghost.

INSTRUCTION

ON THE MYSTERIES OF THE INCARNATION, THE BIRTH, AND THE INFANCY OF JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE INCARNATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

WHAT is the first mystery of Jesus Christ?

It is the Incarnation, in which the Son of God, the eternal Word, is made man in the womb of the most holy Mary; where God has united Himself to man; where the personality of the Word has taken human nature; and where this God made man had begun to offer Himself to the Father as the victim of our reconciliation. The womb of the most holy Mary was the first sanctuary where this God made man became the high priest of the Catholic Church, and had begun to offer His sacrifices, and where the victim had been prepared and offered to God.

In order to have a pure faith in this ineffable mystery, we are obliged to believe—1st. That Jesus Christ, our Saviour, is God and man, perfect God and perfect man. He is God because He has the nature of God, and because He is of the same substance as His Father; and He has taught this Himself when He said: "My Father and I are one;"[1] and He has proved this essential and fundamental truth by His miracles, sustained it at the risk

[1] John, x. 30.

of His life, and at last died for it. It is a truth which the apostles preached to men, for St. Paul calls Him the great God, and St. John always speaks of Him as a God. For this truth the apostles died, and after them millions of martyrs shed the last drop of their blood to maintain it. It is a truth openly declared and always taught by the Church and in her Councils, when she condemned all those heretics who dared to deny or even question it; and, therefore, how could it be possible that we, after so many authorities, could have the least doubt of this grand article of faith? We must also believe that Christ is perfect man, composed of a body and a rational soul, like all other men, and that at His Incarnation He invested Himself with our infirmities, but not our sins, our ignorance, or our inclinations to evil, because all these were unnatural to Him, and could not by any possibility be in Him. All human nature had need of this man-God in order to be cured of its weakness and its infirmities. He is that Son of David according to the flesh, who desired to suffer death for us, and in that quality of man He said that "His Father was greater than He."

2nd. It is necessary to consider two natures in Jesus Christ—namely, the Divine and the human united in a single person, and according to this divine nature He is equal in every respect to His Father, and according to His human nature He has become in all respects like unto us. 3rd. It is necessary also to believe that there are two distinct wills in Jesus, because He has two distinct natures; but that the human will was always perfectly submissive to the divine. 4th. Though the human and divine natures are united without mixture or confusion, still there is but one person in Christ, which is the person of the Son of God, and this can be conceived by considering how the body and soul of man are united to form one person. 5th. It follows from this truth that we can attribute to God, in the person of Christ, that which is proper to man; and we can attribute to man, in the person of Christ, that which is proper to God, because the same person is God and man; and hence it is true to say that God had suffered, that God died, and that He has risen; and it is true also to say that man is the son of God, and even that he is God. Oh, ineffable and incomprehensible union, which lowers God to the position of man, and elevates man to that of God. It was not the personality of the Father nor that of the Holy Ghost that was incarnated; it was only in the person of the Son that this union of the divine and human natures had been formed, and hence making but one person of both natures; still we cannot avoid saying

that the three persons had part and co-operated in this great mystery. The entire Trinity formed this body, created this soul, and laboured together in the union of both, to the person of the Word; and hence we say in the creed that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost. It was necessary that the Holy Ghost should take the part He did in this great mystery of love, because He is the substantial charity of the Father and the Son, because He proceeded from them; and hence as He produced nothing in the Trinity, it was natural that He had an admirable fecundity in the production of the spiritual world of justice.

But why was the Son made man rather than the Father or the Holy Ghost?

Because He is the word of God, His Son, and His invisible image. As at the Word of God all things have been made by Him, by Him man was taken from nothing, and received his being, and hence it was befitting that all things should be repaired by Him; that man should be rescued from the annihilation of sin, and become a new creature through Him who had given him his first existence: and it was likewise befitting that the eternal Word should be incarnated, in order to speak to man and instruct him in the truths of salvation. It was right that He, the image of the invisible God, should become man and unite Himself to us, in order to repair the image of God which we carry within us from our creation, and which sin had sullied and entirely disfigured. It was also reasonable that the Son of the eternal Father should become the Son of man, in order to make man the adopted child of God; and hence St. Paul says that "God sent Him into this world in order that we would receive the adoption of the children of God."

Was this mystery of the Incarnation a suitable way to make known the glory of God?

It was; for it made known to man His divine perfections. 1st. It made known the grandeur of His being. 2nd. His omnipotence. 3rd. His wisdom. 4th His justice. 5th. His love and His goodness. Let us explain and consider these things.

If we regard things by their appearance only, we will find nothing less suitable to God's grandeur, nor more unworthy His majesty than the mystery of the Incarnation; because we see there that the Son of God, equal to Him in every respect, unites Himself to our nature, and takes with it all its infirmities; and yet this state of humiliation, to which the eternal Word reduced Himself, is the very one He selects to manifest to us the majesty and grandeur of

God. God is great because He is an infinite being, subsisting in Himself and independent of every other being, and because He is sufficient for Himself, and has sovereign dominion over all things He wishes all men to acknowledge His majesty, by adoring Him and humbling themselves before Him. I admire His greatness and His grandeur in the adoration which men and angels are obliged to pay Him; but nothing at all makes this majesty of God better known than to see Jesus annihilating Himself before His Father, adoring Him, and humbling Himself in His presence. Could anything be grander than to see a God adored by a God, and who cannot be adored as much as He merits by any other, except by His Son made man. But how could a God be adored by a God? It could not be done if Jesus had not become man, because the Son contemplates the Father in heaven, but does not adore Him; the Word knows His splendour, but does not humble himself before it, because the Word is God as well as the Father; but ever since the Word was invested with human nature and became the man-God, He abases and humbles Himself before His Father, and renders Him homage in the form of a slave and a servant. Behold now how the mystery of the Incarnation manifests the glory of God!

How does the mystery of the Incarnation manifest the omnipotence of God?

Because in the Incarnation the omnipotence of God shines out in its power and splendour. 1st. An angel whose name signifies the *power of God* is sent from heaven by the All-powerful, not to a palace nor to any grandee of this world, but to a poor maiden married to a poor artisan, to say to her that she was to become the Mother of God. Behold here the power of God; a virgin, always remaining a virgin, becomes the Mother of the Most High, the Mother of Him who was to reign in the house of Jacob, and whose empire was never to have an end. It appears impossible to the human mind to conceive that a God should unite Himself with man, that He passed through all the weaknesses of infancy, and that He became the Son of a virgin; and yet all that has happened, because the Virgin Mary has conceived the Son of God, and He has become man. The Holy Ghost formed the body, and this God made man was born of Mary, and appeared upon this earth as a helpless infant.

2nd. God has manifested His omnipotence to us by creating from nothing this wonderful world around us; and yet what is all that compared with the grand mystery of the Incarnation, in which

He annihilates Himself by taking the form of a slave, and appearing less than the angels; and yet God has done all that. All these grand works which we so much admire—the heavens, the earth, and all they contain—are very insignificant things, because God made them all by His single word; but the mystery of the Incarnation is, properly speaking, *the* work of God, for He was entirely occupied in it, and has given it all His concern, all His spirit, and all His heart. All creatures, and all that God made outside of Himself, are nothing only for their connection with Christ, the man-God, because they prefigured and announced Him—because all were made for Him, and all will terminate and end in Him.

3rd. We behold the omnipotence of God in a very admirable way through His abjection in the Incarnation, because it appears impossible and even opposed to reason, and to the nature of a God infinitely exalted above human nature, that He should unite His nature with ours in the unity of the same person. And yet this is so, and God who could not exalt Himself higher, nor become greater than He is, has made it known that He could humble Himself; but it is by His omnipotence, and not through weakness, that He has done so. Oh, let us admire and adore this omnipotence of God in the Incarnation! He who was before all time begins to have a new existence, immensity is confined in the body of a little infant, immutability increases as age advances, the master and the sovereign of the universe reduces Himself to the necessities of this life, independence becomes subject and obedient, impassibility suffers, and the eternal dies. All this is contrary to the order of nature—all is miraculous; and yet it was necessary to be infinitely powerful to do all these things—to unite things which appeared so divided and so contradictory.

4th. God has made His omnipotence appear in the Incarnation, because when He wished to conquer the prince of this world and his strong army, which, in a certain sense, made itself master of the whole world, He merely makes use of His weakness and the humiliations of His life and death to subjugate them. It was by this means, so little and so low in appearance, that He destroyed the empire of the devil, and conquered the earth to Himself.

In what way does the Incarnation make known the wisdom of God?

The wisdom of God appears in the Incarnation in three ways. 1st. The Incarnation appears to man to be folly, and yet it is the effect of a great wisdom in his regard, and Christ placed this effect by

becoming man; for who could have conceived how to undeceive men of the ideas they had of wisdom, by making them believe and place all their confidence in a God made man—a God-man subject to the infirmities of man, and even to death on the cross; still this was the economy adopted by God in becoming man, and he has convinced us that what appeared folly to man was his true wisdom and power. 2nd. It is an effect of His wisdom to remedy evils by their contraries; but Christ did all this because He wished to cure our pride by His humility, our love of pleasures by His sufferings and His sorrows, our desire for riches by His extreme poverty, and our anger by His patience and forbearance. What could be more congruous to the wisdom of a God, who wished to bring back man from his wanderings, than to destroy the sources and the principles of the sins which kept him separated from his sovereign good? And Jesus did this by embracing poverty, humiliations, and sufferings. Finally, the divine wisdom appeared in the Incarnation from the fact that sin had plunged man into such an absolute self-love, that he was almost incapable to conceive anything good without the aid of some corporal image; and hence the divine wisdom judged, in order to make Himself better known to man, who was buried in the love of sensible things, that He ought to invest Himself with a body and become man, and thus accommodate Himself to man's feeble intellect. He desired to lower His grandeur, and present Himself to men as a real man-God, and thus enable them to attach themselves to God by clinging to His despised humanity. This is the reason why St. Augustine calls the mystery of the Incarnation *wisdom become milk*, that is, that the Eternal Wisdom has accommodated itself by an admirable artifice to the gross intellect of men, and that thus His wisdom would nourish them, as milk does the body, by presenting His humanity to them, in order to elevate them by that means to His Divinity.

How does the mystery of the Incarnation manifest the goodness and the justice of God?

The goodness of God appears in this mystery—1st. By giving us the grandest testimony of His love in giving us His own Son. God has so loved the world as to give up His only-begotten Son for it, and thus to make us happy through time and eternity. Ah, how grand is this gift! and hence St. Augustine says, "although God is infinitely powerful, He was not able to provide a more excellent gift than that which He gave the world in giving it His own divine Son; although His wisdom is boundless, it could not discover anything equal to this

gift; and although He is infinitely rich, He had not anything better to give than this good, this immense, this infinite good—equal to God in all things, and given to man when he made himself most unworthy of it."

2nd. The goodness and the love of God appeared in the mystery of the Incarnation, inasmuch as He communicated them to man in a manner most perfect; for how could we behold a grander communication than that which is made in this mystery, where the divine and human natures, the creator and the creature, are united in a single person. Oh, let us admire and adore this goodness, and let us likewise acknowledge that God made His love appear in order to make Himself loved. God tried by all means to draw man to Him; He alarmed him by threats and chastisements, He solicited him by promises, He enticed him with a multitude of benefits, He protected him in a thousand dangers, and, after all, man would not love Him; and still, says St. Augustine, God continually desired man to love Him, and, in the height of His wisdom and the depth of His love, He found at last a means to make Himself loved by man by becoming man Himself. Man loved himself only, and God became man to make Himself an object pleasing to man's love.

Not only does the goodness of God, but His justice as well, shine forth in the mystery of the Incarnation; because God became man and clothed Himself with a passible body, in order to fully satisfy the justice of His Father by his sufferings, a justice which could not be satisfied except by the death of a man-God. Scarcely had this only-begotten Son of the Father become man, than He became a victim for the sins of this world, when He is loaded with the iniquities of mankind, when the divine justice looks upon Him as the being upon whom that same justice will let fall its blows, in order to be satisfied, since it could not be satisfied by any other means. Oh, justice of my God, how terrible thou art! Oh, sin of man, how enormous you are, since such a remedy was necessary to heal the wounds you inflicted. But the mystery of the Incarnation not only manifests the glory of God infinitely, but it procures likewise the greatest benefits for man.

What are those benefits?

They are almost infinite; but they can be reduced to those principal three:—1st. It was through this mystery that God came to wipe off the dishonour and the infamy which sin had fixed upon man. 2nd. It has made us participators in the divine nature. And 3rd. It has made us know the excellence of our nature, and how great is its value in the presence of God.

How did Christ wipe off the infamy and the dishonour which sin had fixed upon man?

Sin dishonoured man in many respects, because it made him like the brute beasts, it degraded and stripped him of all the dignity belonging to a child of God, it made him an associate and a slave to Satan, and it deprived him of all the blessings of grace and his right to eternal glory. The soul, the heart, and the body of sinful man bore the marks of this dishonour upon them. The soul was blinded with darkness, that is with error, false principles, and by ideas the most shameful and extravagant. The heart was corrupted by criminal offences, it became the dwelling-place of impure spirits, and a temple profaned by a thousand abominations. The body was dishonoured by infamous actions unworthy of reason; and hence man became, in a certain sense, brutalized and profoundly debased, because he did not know the high dignity to which God had raised him by creating him to his own image and likeness. But God sent His divine Son to uplift this fallen man from his degradation, and to efface those marks of infamy through the mystery of the Incarnation. He came to destroy sin, and the grand design He had in becoming man was to restore to him the honour and glory which sin had taken from him. He came as the truth and the light, to enlighten our souls by making them know their sovereign good, their principle, and their end. He came to teach them their duties and their obligations to God and to their neighbour. 2nd. He came as justice and sanctity to purify our hearts and to sanctify them by the infusion of His love, and He became Himself our justice and our sanctification. 3rd. He has come to sanctify our bodies by making them the temples of the Holy Ghost, dwellings for the divinity, and even members of His own body. Oh, what an honour is this! But let us see what further means Jesus has adopted to honour and to exalt us. No one believes it his duty to suffer humiliation and death for another; but when man dishonoured himself by his pride and ambition, Jesus wished, through His own humiliation, to heal that pride in man by humbling him, and thus to restore him to his lost dignity and glory. Who, says St. Augustine, could refrain from blushing—who could be haughty and proud, when he knows that it was through love for him that a God so far humbled and annihilated Himself, as to take the form of a slave and a servant, in order, through His humiliations, to repair the disorders which pride caused in man.

What is the second benefit which the mystery of the Incarnation procured for man?

It made us participators in the divine nature. Oh, inestimable grace which exalts man so extremely, and which obliges us to live in the most holy manner we can. Let us labour to understand this great grace, and let us bear in mind how excellent it is, and how different it is from all the other gifts which God gives to us. God has conferred great favours on man by creation, but by the gift of justification He made him—1st. The grandest favour of all, because He made him a new creature, and communicated Himself to him in a most intimate manner, by making him participator of His light and His glory. In the Incarnation God communicated to man's nature His own essence, His divine nature; and He did it so perfectly, that it is true to say that God is man, and that man is God in Jesus Christ. O my God, how worthy of our admiration and adoration is this great mystery! 2nd. He made us rational creatures, through the natural gifts we have received from Him, and through His supernatural gifts, that is His graces, we become just. By the beatific vision we are made happy, and by the Incarnation we become, in a certain sense, as God, because, says St. Augustine, God has become man in order that man may become God, by participating in the divine nature, and by being united to it, and to the person of the Word. Therefore, says St. Leo, we should know our dignity, and as we have had the happiness and the advantage to be made participators of the divine nature, we should never again be so false as to relapse into our former crimes, so unworthy of this grace, and of the sublime dignity to which the Incarnation had raised us. A good so great ought to produce great things in us. We vainly flatter ourselves, if we think we participate in this great good when we limit our devotions to the recitation of some vocal prayers, or some works of piety generally performed without charity. It is necessary that our lives should be worthy of the union we have contracted, by the Incarnation, with God. It is necessary that everything belonging to us, our soul and body, our desires and our actions, our words and our sufferings, should be holy, and that all should breathe nothing but sanctity. And as we are filled with the gifts of God, and with the fruits of good works, we should fly from all the corruption of concupiscence, so prevalent in this world on account of the passions and the wicked lives of men. We should have an extreme horror for sin, and after the Incarnation, we should not know how to commit any of those sins, without dishonouring, in some way, the Divine Being of whom we have been made participators.

What is the third benefit which the Incarnation has procured for us?

The Son of God, in becoming man, has made known to us, not only how much he loves us, but also how much he values us, and if we reflect a little on what we are, we will soon be convinced that our soul is something most valuable, because by its nature it is supremely exalted above our bodies. The vast machinery of the universe, the great solar system in immense space, and all this earth, are nothing compared with the soul, because its spiritual nature elevates it above all material substances, and because it bears the character and the image of the Divinity impressed upon it. But, alas! men do not know the grandeur, the excellence, and the value which they ought to fix upon it. Jesus Christ came to teach us its value by giving Himself, in order to hold and to possess us. Listen to St. Paul saying to the Corinthians: "You are purchased at a great price;"[1] and that price is the labour, the life, and the blood of our Redeemer. The best way to keep in mind the value of your immmortal soul is, never to forget the price it cost. It was not purchased with corruptible gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Jesus, a single drop of which is of more value than all created things. And yet behold the blindness, or rather the madness of man, who gives his soul to Satan for nothing, for a momentary pleasure; because he violates the law of God to gratify his fleeting passion. Man is very worthy of compassion, for sometimes he values himself too much, and often not sufficiently. His pride flatters him that he is something grand, because it persuades him that he has distinctions which he has not; and sometimes he does not estimate his worth sufficiently, because he forgets the great price which Jesus paid to possess him, and this is why he abandons himself to all that is base and unworthy of his true greatness. Therefore, when the devil and the world present their pleasures, their goods, and their glory to us, in order to become masters of our souls, let us remember that those souls are worth more than all those false charms, and that it would be a great injustice to give them at so low a price, and to sell them to any other master than to Jesus, who purchased them and to whom they belong.

AN EJACULATION TO JESUS IN THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION.

I adore you, O Word made flesh! you were from eternity in the bosom of your Father; you came forth from it to take, in a

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 20.

certain sense, a new existence in the chaste womb of a virgin. Oh, what grandeur shines forth from this mystery of annihilation, and what power, wisdom, and mercy as well! With all your power you could not exalt yourself higher, because there could not be any one higher than God; but by your Incarnation you could let men see to what a humiliation you could lower yourself. Oh, what wisdom is contained in this mystery of the Incarnation, which God had predestined and prepared before all ages for our glory—a wisdom which none of the princes of this world had known, and which no one could have imagined—a wisdom through which God destined to save mankind by His weakness, His humiliations, and His sufferings.

In this mystery we can see mercy, peace, justice, and truth giving each other a holy embrace. In this mystery God unites Himself to man, and gives him that fond embrace for which He so long desired, and where God makes eternal an alliance with us, because God will be eternally man, and man, through Jesus Christ, will be eternally God. Oh, what an admirable mystery, which gave an adorer to God worthy of the grandeur of His being, a priest who honours Him in a manner proportioned to His infinite sanctity, and a victim who fully satisfied His justice; a mystery which gave a Saviour to man, a Redeemer to deliver him from the tyranny of the devil, a repairer who rectified all the disorders which sin had worked in him, which effaced all the shame and infamy which overwhelmed and disfigured him, and which raised him so high as to make him partaker of the divine nature. But, alas! my God, I am filled with confusion when I reflect on what I am, when I see how little my life and conduct correspond with those great and precious graces which you have given us in this the first of your mysteries.

The first efforts which you made to seek me were to descend from your throne of glory, and to humble yourself to annihilation; and by this humiliation you gave glory to your Father, and exalted me and mankind. Is it possible, after all this, that pride rules my heart, and that I refuse to put all my glory in humiliations? No, my amiable Saviour, I will no longer seek to exalt myself; for by exalting myself I am weakened, and by humbling myself I will approach to you, and even become like to you. But, my Lord Jesus, what can I do without you; for you, as the Word of God, as His Son, as His perfect likeness, have become man. As the Word of God, speak to my heart, instruct it, and make it love all

you speak to it. As Son of God you also became the Son of Mary, and you made me a participator of the divine adoption, so that being united to you, I may make with you the Son of God only. As the image of the invisible God, who has appeared in time, renew in me all the traits of the Divinity, which I have effaced. Impress and firmly fix yourself on my heart, so as to make me like unto you in time and eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

The second mystery of Christ is His birth. Faith obliges us to believe that Christ is God and man, that the Word was made flesh in the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary, and that He was born in the city of Bethlehem according to the expressed predictions of the prophets. "And thou Bethlehem Ephrata art a little one amongst the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel, and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity."[1] In this prophecy we see two births of Christ, one from the Father, who engendered Him from all eternity, and the other temporal, when the Word made flesh was born of the Virgin Mary, and just at the time foretold by the prophets. In eternity the Son of God was begotten of the Father without a mother; and in time He was born of a mother without a father; and this is why we believe that Mary always was a virgin, just as it was foretold by the prophet, who said, "and a virgin shall conceive and shall bring forth a son." Behold the grandeur and the wonders of this mystery, where the only Son of God becomes the Son of man, where He who was begotten from eternity was born in time, where a virgin became a mother, the mother of the man-God, and always continued a virgin; and hence the General Council of Ephesus gave Mary the august title of Mother of God.

Why did the Son of God wish to be born of a virgin?

1st. Because it was fit that a body which was to be the temple of the Divinity, and to which the Son of God was to unite Himself hypostatically or personally, should be formed from flesh entirely pure and holy, and in which the slightest stain of any kind of sin could not be found. 2nd. Because Jesus, when choosing a virgin as His

[1] Micheas, v. 2.

mother, desired to make it known in the New Law how much He honoured virginity, which till then had been regarded as an opprobrium and as a species of chastisement; and hence the state of virginity was regarded, after Jesus was born of a virgin, as the most holy and the most perfect state in the Church. How truly happy are they who embrace that state, if they lead a life entirely holy, and if Jesus finds them worthy to dwell in them, by His spirit and His sacraments.

At what time and in what condition was Jesus born, and what do all the circumstances of His birth teach us?

1st. Jesus was born in the plenitude of time foretold by the prophets, when all nations submitted to one emperor, and when all peoples rejoiced in a profound peace; thus proving that He came to tranquillize all things, to be Himself our peace, and that those who would submit to His empire would rejoice in a veritable peace, and that all would constitute but one flock and one kingdom. 2nd. He wished to be born in the city of Bethlehem, where David was born, to show that he was of his race, as the prophets foretold he should be; and as Bethlehem signifies the *house of bread*, He wished to convey that He Himself was to become bread to feed and nourish the children of the Church, in which alone is found the true bread of life. 3rd. Jesus did not wish to be born in His own country to show us that we ought to live as strangers upon this earth, that we ought to be always ready to quit our country to carry out his commands, and to abandon ourselves entirely to His leadership. 4th. Jesus desired to be born in a stable, in extreme poverty and profound humiliation, for reasons most important.

What are these reasons?

He could have taken, had he wished, a more befitting and less humiliating condition than what He had chosen, but that would not be so adapted to the designs he had in view, of detaching men from visible things, and thus teaching them by His example that all the goods of this world are vile and contemptible; and He adopted this poor and humble life also to undeceive the Jews and pagans. The pagans knew very little of any goods but those of this life. Some of their philosophers held good principles on the contempt of worldly things, but their conduct gave the lie to their words. The Jews were the only people who knew and adored the true God, and yet they looked upon the goods of this life as the recompenses of God's promises to them; but Jesus, the light of the world, the eternal, the incarnated wisdom, appeared in poverty in a stable, and

had chosen this lowly condition to destroy all the false ideas which the Jews and Gentiles had formed touching visible things. It was as a God, the reformer of the heart and soul of man, that He selected this abject state; and hence it follows that it is the best and most suitable one to secure salvation; because, in this mystery of His birth, we must look upon Jesus as a legislator and doctor, who came to give laws to the world, and to teach it as well, and who commenced to practise what he was to command and to teach man; and hence we see Him, even in the crib, laying the foundation of the New Law, which He came to establish.

In His birth He appeared poor, and humble, and suffering, because his great design was to destroy the love of pleasures, the love of earthly goods and glory, so triumphant in this world, and to substitute in their place the love of sufferings and the spirit of humility and poverty. Upon these points it is that the grand edifice of the Church is built, and upon which all our piety, if true, ought to be established.

What have been the first feelings and dispositions of Jesus when entering this world, and appearing amongst men?

When He came forth from the virgin womb of His stainless Mother, He felt, in a certain sense, in the temple of His Father, and then He commenced, as St. Paul says, to offer Himself to His Father, saying: "Behold, I come; in the head of the book it is written of me that I shall do thy will, O God. Sacrifices, and oblations, and holocausts for sin thou wouldst not; neither are they pleasing to thee which are offered according to the law."[1] He sacrifices not only His body to His Father, but His will as well; because He desires to have no other will than His, and because He wishes to live in a continual dependence on His commands. In this way it is that the grace, the love, and the goodness of our Saviour have appeared to mankind, and it is thus He has taught us how to serve God, and how to give Him a true worship by renouncing ourselves and offering our whole being to Him, as pure and stainless holocausts; by adoring Him and confiding in Him for all our necessities, and thus to be always disposed to be immolated for His glory. These are the first sentiments with which Jesus inspires us at His entrance into this world, and into which we should cheerfully enter.

Why did Jesus wish to become an infant, and to pass through all the miseries of that helpless state?

It was to prove to us that He was not only man, like us; but also

[1] Heb. x. 7, 8.

to sanctify our childhood, and to teach us in what way to spend our young days, which are generally squandered in ignorance and in endless and useless amusements.

He became a little infant also to teach us to live like little children by our humility, our sweetness of manner, and our continual dependence on His grace and protection; and hence, says St. Augustine, "although God is infinitely great, He became little to teach us to be little also. Our pride," says he, "makes us presumptuous, and makes us believe that we are strong and powerful; and the Son of God, the Eternal Wisdom, humbled and abased Himself to exalt us. This wisdom," says he, "has built itself a house from our clay; it appeared weak, and infirm, and leaning, in a certain sense, upon us, so that we could reanimate and refresh ourselves upon it; and when raising itself up afterwards, it will raise us up also, will bear us upon its bosom, and by this means will heal our pride and our presumption."

EJACULATION TO JESUS IN THE MYSTERY OF HIS BIRTH.

O Eternal Word, God of all gods, Light of all lights, and only Son of the Eternal Father, begotten from His bosom from all eternity, who dost dwell in light inaccessible, you, Lord, desired to come amongst us, and you made yourself visible by being born of a Virgin. I adore you in your profound abasement. Why, my adorable Jesus, have you desired to be born in poverty and in a state so humiliating? Have you not a sovereign and legitimate right to make use of all the goods of this world, and to choose a state more agreeable and less painful? Yes, my Saviour, you could do so without doubt, because you are God and universal heir to your Father; but you preferred to deprive yourself of all these advantages to teach us to seek and to love other goods, grander and more able to make us happy; you desired to be born poor to enrich me with your poverty, and to detach me from all the goods and all the glory of this world.

Alas, my dear Lord, how blind I was to be seduced by their false glitter, and to believe them substantial. How vile and contemptible they must be, since you so kindly warned me against them. Therefore, dear Lord, I shall never again dread poverty, humiliations, or sufferings, because you loved them, and used them as arms to successfully destroy the three evil sources of sin, and thus help me to work out my salvation. This stable, this crib, these poor bandages with

[1] Confessions, book vii. ch. 18.

which you were swathed, that state of infancy and weakness to which you have been reduced, all teach and manifest your love to me.

O stable, more magnificent and grand than the most splendid of palaces, what great things do you not suggest to us; you reprove and condemn all the superb edifices which the vanity of men has erected; you condemn all the superfluous furniture which pride persuades us is necessary for us. People adorn stone walls with gold and silver, and the abandoned Jesus had only a stable for His dwelling, and is often hungry and without a home or a lodging in the persons of the poor, who are His members. Is it possible, my divine Jesus, that after seeing you in this lowly condition, we can seek after vain amusements and foolish adornments for our dwellings? How can a true Christian complain of a bad bed or lodging, when you, my Saviour, had only a stable for your home?

O crib in which my Redeemer lay, you are more dear and precious to my eyes than all the gilded thrones of earthly kings. O swathings of my Saviour, you are more beautiful than the purple of princes; and how cheering you must be, and what comfort you must bring to those who are really poor for Christ. O grace of my Saviour, which has appeared to all men, conduct me to the feet of this divine Infant, that I may find Him and become like Him—poor in spirit and in truth. O divine Infant, infuse into my heart the spirit of your infancy; make me humble, submissive, and obedient. Grant me the meekness and the simplicity of a little child, that I may become small in malice and great in virtue, that my pride may be crushed out under the feet of your crib, and that I may never seek to raise myself from beneath it. May the love of riches and worldly pomp and glory be for ever extinguished at the feet of this divine Infant.

O grace of my Saviour, made manifest to the world, enlighten, instruct, and teach me to renounce all the sinful desires of the present time. Teach me to use with great moderation, and only when necessary, and never with cupidity, the things of this world. Teach me to use them as if I used them not, to possess them as if not possessing them, so that I can live in a general contempt of all that belongs to it, and that all my desires may tend to you, and towards that eternal happiness which should be the only object of our hope and desires. Amen.

SECOND INSTRUCTION.

ON THE MYSTERY OF THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE MYSTERIES OF THE CIRCUMCISION AND OF THE EPIPHANY.

WHAT is the first mystery of the infancy of Jesus ?

The first mystery of the life and infancy of Jesus is His Circumcision, which happened, as the law commanded, eight days after His birth. In this mystery He commenced to shed His adorable blood for us, and took the most holy name of Jesus—a name given to Him by his eternal Father, and announced to the most holy Mary by the Angel Gabriel.

Why did Jesus wish to be circumcised ?

He wished to be so for many reasons—1st. He wished to take real flesh and blood, to refute certain heretics who, he foresaw, would afterwards assert that His flesh was formed from air, and hence not real, but of the same substance as the Divinity. 2nd. As circumcision was the distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish people and of the children of Abraham, he desired to receive it, and thus make known that He was of the race of Abraham, from whom the Messiah was to be descended. 3rd. He wished to give us one of the grandest examples of His humility, in thus passing for a sinner in the eyes of men, and bearing on His adorable flesh the shameful mark of sin, in order to obtain pardon for our sins. 4th. He desired to submit to this hard and painful law to deliver us, as St. Paul says, from the heavy burden of the Old Law. For this figurative and corporal circumcision He substituted a spiritual one, which consists in a continual retrenchment of our thoughts and desires, and of all the useless and criminal affections which, as so many offsprings of concupiscence, always assail us. It is necessary that we should have the sword of the word always in our hands, not only to cut off all that is bad in our interior, but all that may be reprehensible in our exterior as well. The Jews were not truly circumcised, because St. Paul teaches that the true circumcision is that which the Holy Ghost makes upon the heart when he extinguishes cupidity within it, and fills its place with charity ; and hence the same Apostle says elsewhere that we are truly circumcised when we serve God with a spiri-

tual and internal worship—a worship not content with an external religion, but which makes us perform all our works, and all our exercises of piety and religion, according to the movements of the Spirit of Jesus dwelling within us.

What is the second important circumstance of the mystery of Circumcision?

It is that our Redeemer was called Jesus, which means Saviour, a name which suits Him in every particular, because He is the Saviour of mankind, because He delivered them not only from the servitude and slavery of the devil, and from the spiritual death of sin, but from the everlasting death of the body as well; because through His glorious Resurrection He made man enter into an immortal state. "Unless the soul," says St. Bernard, "is watered with the holy unction of this sweet name of Jesus, it will be filled with aridity, no matter how highly nourished it may otherwise be. I find no taste," says he, "in all that men write, if I do not read the name of Jesus in it. Nothing pleases me in discourses, in conferences, or conversations, if I do not hear there the holy Name of Jesus, for that adorable Name is sweeter to my mouth than honey, and more pleasing to my ears than the harmonies of the most melodious music, and to my heart it is always a subject of joy and consolation." It is the admirable Name, because, according to the promise of Christ himself, all miracles must be performed through it, because this is the Name which gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, activity to the lame, speech to the dumb, life to the dead, and expelled demons from the bodies of those they possessed. O omnipotent Name, through you the Apostles triumphed over the world, made nations obedient to Jesus, vanquished philosophers, humbled kings, disarmed the powers of this world, destroyed idols, and conquered Rome, the very centre of paganism. Holy Name and terrible! for at that sweet Name alone every knee must bend in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. Blessed Name, above all names which the Church makes use of in all her prayers, and with which she terminates them. Hallowed Name, which St. Paul had always in his mouth, and which he never ceased announcing in his epistles. And yet, O adorable Name, how little you are respected by Christians—how often used in vain, blasphemed, and pronounced without faith or piety.

What is the second mystery of the infancy of Jesus?

It is the Epiphany, or the manifestation of Jesus Christ, because our Redeemer desired to make known in this mystery that he came

into this world, not only to call the Jews into the true faith by being born amongst them, but to call the Gentiles into it also. The Magi, who were pagans and idolators, were conducted externally by a brilliant star, and instructed internally by a powerful grace, of which the star was a figure; and when they came to Bethlehem they prostrated themselves before the Son of God made man, and adored him as God, as the man-God, as the King of kings, and as the Lord of lords. These Magi came from Arabia, and were the first fruits of the Gentile Church, who were soon to be enlightened with the light of the gospel to form the only Church, one sole body and people, with those Jews who were to believe in Jesus Christ—all to be united in the same faith and religion, and all to have Jesus Christ as their chief.

Can we discern any instruction for the regulation of our lives from this mystery of the Epiphany?

Yes; because it contains three or four very important instructions. First, it teaches that we ought to learn from the Magi to seek Jesus with fidelity and courage, fearing no danger, and unconquered by any difficulty; that we ought to follow the promptings of grace, figured by the motion of the star, and to abandon ourselves without reserve to the spirit of God; because Jesus is our great and only good, and in Him we ought to regard everything as nothing which does not conduct us to Him. The Magi did not seek Jesus till He first sought them; because it is He who seeks after us by His grace and His pastors, still figured by the star externally conducting the Magi.

The second instruction which we find in this mystery is, that it is not amongst the great of this world we are to find Jesus, because ambition, love of pleasures, effeminacy, and dissipation of life, reign in the courts and palaces of the rich and the powerful, and hence banish Jesus from them; and this is why the Magi found him in a stable, and in the obscurity of a poor and humble life.

The third instruction to be found in this mystery is, that when we have found Jesus we should adore Him, like the Magi, and bow down before Him as the God and the King who alone should reign over us by His power and His love.

Fourth, we ought to make Him, as the Magi did, an offering of all we are and all we have; like them we ought to make an oblation of our body by a mortified and penitential life, figured by the myrrh which they presented to the infant Saviour in the stable; we ought to make an oblation of our soul by prayer, figured by the incense, which cannot ascend to God unless animated by charity; we ought

to make an offering of all our worldly goods, by making a holy and Christian use of them, employing them according to the precepts of the Gospel, and for the relief of our neighbour.

EJACULATION TO JESUS IN THE MYSTERIES OF THE CIRCUMCISION AND THE EPIPHANY.

Never cease, dear Lord Jesus, to impress upon the innermost recesses of my heart the spirit and the grace of your divine mysteries. May your circumcision operate in my heart an entire retrenchment of whatever it has of a criminal, a useless, or superfluous nature, so that I may never feed myself with imaginary necessities, or persuade my mind that I have need of more things than I require; that I may have the knife of circumcision always in hand, to cut away my self-love and whatever my soul may desire contrary to a Christian and penitential life. I know I am a sinner, and that I ought to bear upon me the pain, the shame, and the confusion which the recollection of my sins should cause in me. My Jesus, you have given me an example of this by passing, in the eyes of man, as a sinner, although you are the sanctity and the justice that justifies all men, because you washed them all free from their sins. Alas! what wretches we are. We have sinned, and are sinning every day, and such is our pride that we do not wish anyone to know that we are sinners. May your humility, my dear Jesus, cure my vanity, and, being circumcised in heart, I may serve God in spirit and in truth. May your amiable Name, O divine Saviour, be to my soul as oil flowing over it, and that, like oil, your holy Name may illumine it, fortify it, and sweeten its pains and its sorrows. May I always pronounce that adorable Name with fervour, confidence, and love; that I may find in it my deliverance, my salvation, and my life; and that it may always be deeply graven on my heart and visible on my lips.

O venerable Magi, how fortunate were you to have seen with your eyes the infant Jesus in the stable; how much grace and sweetness did you not find in this divine Infant. It is true that you abandoned all to find Him, but how liberally He recompensed your faith and labours; you sought him through many hardships, but you found him with boundless joy. Draw me, dear Jesus, so close to you by your powerful grace, that your light may shine upon me and illumine the way that leads to you. But, alas! my Jesus, where shall I find you? Where are you, dear Lord? Speak to my heart, which yearns for you alone. Like the spouse, I have sought you sorrowing,

and I have not found you. O King of the heavens and the earth and Master of the universe, where are you and where do you dwell? In the stable—poor, unknown, and almost abandoned by the whole world, in suffering and humiliation, I find you; and by these characteristics I discover you as my King and my God. Reign, O my God and infant King, reign in my heart and extinguish all my passions, so that nothing shall be in me, in my being, in my actions, nor in my possessions, which would be unfit for a continual offering to you. May my life from henceforward be one of prayer, of love, and of mortification; and as I have been called into the true faith, may I always live according to its teachings; and as I have been transformed from a Gentile into a Christian, may I continue a member and a part of that only Spouse you have elected to be eternally united to you. Amen.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE MYSTERY OF THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE, AND OF HIS FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

What is the third mystery of the infancy of Jesus?

It is the Presentation in the temple, to which He was carried by his blessed Mother, forty days after His birth, to be offered there to God. The Old Law ordained that all the first-born male infants should be consecrated to God, but that they could be redeemed by an offering. The rich were bound to offer a lamb and a turtle, or a young pigeon; and the poor were to offer two turtles or two pigeons, or one of each. There are many things in this mystery most worthy of notice and pregnant with salutary instruction. 1st. The holy virgin Mother who offered Jesus. 2nd. Jesus who was offered. 3rd. The holy dispositions with which the virgin Mother offered Him. 4th. The gifts made to redeem Him. And 5th. The feelings of the holy old man, Simeon, who received Him into his arms.

What instructions ought we to draw from all these circumstances?

1st. The holy Virgin is a figure of the whole Church, of the priests, and of each of the faithful who offer Jesus Christ to His eternal Father as the only offering worthy of God. The Church has received this Son from His Father as a testimony of His love for her, and she continually presents Christ to Him, and offers herself

with Him. Alas! what could we present to this Supreme Being sufficiently befitting His Divine Majesty, if we had not this beloved Son, in whom He finds all His complacency.

2nd. We must remember that the holy Mary goes to the temple to make her offering just after she had submitted to the law of purification, which could not bind her, and after having spent forty days in solitude, prayer, and silence, excluded from the temple and all holy things. How can we believe ourselves in a proper state to approach Jesus after having lived in crime and dissipation, until we are first purified by penance, humiliations, prayer, and other pious exercises? If nearly all this was necessary in the Old Law, which was only a figure and a shadow of the reality, which we possess, how much greater should our purity be when approaching Jesus and offering to Him in the New Law?

3rd. Jesus was offered and consecrated to God in His own temple, to show us that he was the sovereign priest who was to exercise the functions of a priesthood more holy and august than that of Aaron; that He was the veritable victim typified by all the figures of the Old Law, and wholly consecrated to the glory of His Father. Jesus also offers Himself as the first-born before all creatures, and first of His brothers in the priesthood, figured by the first-born consecrated to God; and hence He holds the first rank in Heaven, on earth, and in the Church. Finally, Jesus comes to the temple to accomplish the prophecy of Malachi, who said to the Jews: "Behold, I send my angel, and he will prepare the way before my face; and presently the Lord whom you seek and the angel of the testament whom you desire shall come to His temple."[1] But, alas! he did come into that holy place, and was offered there, and was recognised only by the aged Simeon and the good widow Anne. Behold this great ruler, this all-powerful Messiah, this great minister, priest, and mediator of the new alliance, more holy and perfect than those formerly consecrated by Moses, behold Him becoming an infant for love of us.

4th. Jesus wished to be redeemed with the two turtles or two young pigeons, the offering of the poor, to point out to us, as He did in almost all the other acts of His life, the love and esteem He had for that poverty which we so much dislike, and which we generally regard as the greatest and the most to be dreaded of all evils. My God, can it be possible that we, the Christian brothers of Jesus, can desire to be rich, and not rather follow the example of

[1] Malachias, iii. 1.

Jesus, who preferred poverty? Do we not see many amongst the poor longing to become rich, and few amongst the rich desiring to be poor for the love of Jesus? The birds which the Mother of Jesus offered to redeem Him represent, says St. Bernard, two states of life. The turtle or dove is a chaste, solitary bird, continually cooing a melancholy strain, and represents to us those who embrace a solitary and penitential life, in order to devote themselves to the contemplation of invisible things. The pigeon, a domestic bird, extremely mild, simple, and prolific, represents the active life, and indicates that those who embrace it should possess a simple and upright heart, ought to be full of charity, guileless, without passion, and abounding in good works.

5th. We discover the idea we should have of a true Christian in the person of holy Simeon, for he was just before God and man; full of devotion, love, and respect for God, he was exact in justice and sincere in charity for his neighbour; he lived in continual expectation of the Saviour, his heart was entirely detached from the things of this world; he followed with fidelity the lights and whisperings of the Holy Ghost, with which he was frequently replenished; and after having received Jesus in his arms, he desired to be delivered from the prison of this life. That holy man prophesied that Jesus would be a light to enlighten every nation that would believe in Him; and those tapers which are blessed and lighted on the feast of the Purification indicate all this, and typify the light of the gospel, with which we have been enlightened when we were received into the faith. Therefore, let us learn from this good old man to live true Christians, to desire only Jesus Christ, and to conduct ourselves in every way according to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

What is the fourth mystery of the infancy of Jesus?

It is the flight into Egypt. When Herod designed to kill the infant Jesus, an angel made it known to St. Joseph, and ordered him to take the infant and His mother and to retire into Egypt, and remain there till further noticed.

What instruction ought we to learn from this flight into Egypt?

It is certain that the omnipotent Jesus could save Himself had He desired it, and He had no necessity to fly into Egypt; but he did all for our instruction. 1st. To demonstrate that if we wish to go to God we must do so by the most humble means, and, like Him, to make use of the human means He used, to avoid death till the time He had fixed upon had arrived.

2nd. He wished to teach us by His example then what He

afterwards taught us in words—namely, when we are persecuted in one place, we ought to fly, if we can, to another place, and not to expose ourselves rashly to our persecutors, and to await in peace till Providence would deliver us from their hands.

3rd. Jesus teaches us in this mystery that as He was persecuted by the world in His infancy, that His disciples and His children ought likewise to expect no better treatment from it, particularly whilst they are in their spiritual infancy; because it is whilst we are in this young state that the world makes its greatest assaults upon us, and persecutes us in the most violent fashion.

4th. Jesus wished to accomplish the prophecy of Isaias, who said: "Behold, the Lord will ascend upon a swift cloud, and will enter into Egypt, and the idols there shall be moved by His presence, and the heart of that land shall melt in the midst thereof."[1] This prophecy, according to many historians, was literally fulfilled when Jesus, the Son of justice, clothed with humanity as with a little cloud, entered into Egypt.

5th. We learn from this flight of the persecuted Jesus that as the world persecuted Him, it will also persecute us; that as it hated Him, it will hate us, His followers; that if we wish to live piously, we must necessarily suffer persecution; and that the best means to conquer is to fly, and to seek retirement in the sure refuge and sanctuary of virtue.

EJACULATION TO JESUS IN THE MYSTERIES OF THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE AND HIS FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

I adore you, my divine Jesus, in the mystery of your presentation in the temple, because you appeared for the first time in the holy place to offer and consecrate yourself to the glory of your Father as the first-born of Mary, your most holy Mother, as the first-born before all creatures; and as the first fruits of all the true Israelites of God, you presented yourself to God in the holy temple where you have so often been figured by so many ceremonies and sacrifices to establish a new priesthood, to present there a most holy and perfect victim, and to be there the minister and the angel of a new and eternal alliance, which you wished to make with your people in a temple much more holy and magnificent than Solomon's. May you be for ever blessed for all the great graces you came to communicate to us. You, my Jesus, are the only offering worthy of God, an offering which the most holy Mary made on that day.

[1] Isaias, xix. 1.

It is not she alone that offered you, but the entire Church, and each one of the faithful; and this is why you found the incomprehensible means of being always in our churches, and that you will remain in them to the consummation of ages. You wish us to enter those holy and awful places to present you to our common Father, and we will receive you there not upon our arms, as the holy Simeon did, but into our inmost souls. O my dear Jesus, how well prepared I should be for an act so terrible and so holy. I see your most pure and holy Mother, full of all graces, absenting herself from the temple, passing forty days in solitude, in prayer, and in all the exercises of religion. I see her submitting to the humiliating law from which she was dispensed on account of her divine maternity, and I see her doing all before making this one offering of you.

What ought not we sinners do, we who so often conceived and brought forth so much crime—how can we dare to take this divine Victim to offer Him and to receive Him, without being first purified in the humiliations of penance? Grant, Lord Jesus, that I may never appear in your temple with hands stained with crime and a heart filled with the love of this world. I have been consecrated to God in baptism to live for you alone. May I live for the future a true Christian, and, invested with your justice, that I may love, fear, and respect you; and, filled with the Holy Ghost, I can follow His inspirations, so that my life may be an uninterrupted expectation of your glorious coming.

When I shall live in this manner my soul shall desire nothing more on this earth, and, being nourished with your adorable body and blood, it shall meet death in peace. O my divine Jesus, I know that as long as I live in this world it will fight against me, in order to exile you from my soul. Ah, my Lord Jesus, may your flight into Egypt teach me to fly from all the deceits and vanities of this world. Transport me, dear Redeemer, into that holy retirement where the world can never separate you from my heart. Give me the wings of the dove, its simplicity, its meekness, and its fecundity in good works. Give me the tears of the turtle, that I may separate myself from the world, your enemy and mine, that I may serve you in penitence, in the practice of charity, and in the contemplation of things invisible and eternal. Amen.

THIRD INSTRUCTION.

ON THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS FROM THE AGE OF TWELVE YEARS UP TO HIS DEATH.

WHAT are the mysteries of Jesus from the age of twelve on to His death?

They are His hidden life, His baptism, His temptations in the desert, His transfiguration, and His public life. All these mysteries demand a new application in order to obtain the necessary instructions from them.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE HIDDEN LIFE OF JESUS AND HIS BAPTISM.

WHAT has been the hidden life of Jesus?

He lived, from the age of twelve to the age of thirty, in St. Joseph's house at Nazareth, labouring with His adorable hands, obedient to Mary and Joseph, living unknown to the world, praying in silence, doing penance for us, and preparing Himself in this way for the functions of His approaching ministry.

What instruction should we draw from the hidden life of Jesus?

1st. Jesus teaches in His hidden life that as He came to be the physician of mankind, and to remedy their misfortunes, he ought to show them how to heal certain chief maladies, such as pride, the love of esteem, the desire to rule, impatience, anxiety to see and to be seen, and other personal vanities. It was for this object he led a hidden and obscure life for thirty years, a life unknown to man, a life of labour and subjection, and thus teaching us that the most proper way to heal our pride is to hide ourselves, to live in obscurity and in the contempt which the world always fixes upon us, and which contempt we should have for it.

2nd. Jesus teaches by His hidden life that a Christian ought to live in subjection and obedience to those who have authority over him; that this obedience ought to be voluntary, humble, and exact even in the smallest things.

3rd. Jesus wished to sanctify his labours, and to make us understand by His example that a child of God is obliged to occupy himself in labour, to fly from idleness, and to sanctify his labour by prayer, silence, and a great spirit of penance.

4th. Jesus desired, through His hidden life, to teach us to seek as Christians a life hidden and unknown to the world, and that we ought not to abandon it till God calls us from it by a well-marked vocation. We should advance in this retirement, like Jesus, not only in years, but in grace and virtue, and treasure up in our souls, as the Mother of Jesus did, all we heard Him speaking to us, in order to nourish our souls with the word of God and meditation, and thus prepare ourselves for all the functions and obligations of our vocation.

5th. Jesus spent only three years of His life in active life, and the previous thirty were hidden and unknown, to teach us that our hidden life in this world ought to be much longer than our active life. Alas! how many persons have we seen who have made terrible falls, and who have been useless to themselves and to all others because they were too solicitous to show themselves to the world and to appear before the public? Happy is he who goes forth from his retirement only when God calls him, and after he has died to the world, and leads a hidden life in God with Jesus.

What is the mystery of the baptism of Jesus, and what are the spiritual circumstances connected with it?

When Jesus was thirty years of age, He came down from Nazareth to meet St. John, who was administering the baptism of penance in the river Jordan, and was then preparing men for the coming of the Messiah, whose arrival on earth he had already announced to them. This stainless Lamb of God mingled amongst the crowd of postulants for baptism; and when He was refused baptism by St. John, a holy combat of humility ensued between them, till the Redeemer commanded him, whom He had previously sanctified in his mother's womb, to baptise Him.

Why did Jesus desire to be baptised by St. John?

1st. He did so to give us an example of humility, because, as He appeared feeble at His birth and a sinner at His circumcision, He desired to appear penitent by now receiving the baptism of penance.

2nd. He wished, says St. Ambrose, to be baptised and not at all to be purified from sin, which He could not have; but to sanctify the waters, which, when touched by our Redeemer's immaculate flesh, would become cleansed and consecrated, and hence befitting matter for a more holy and efficacious baptism than that administered by St. John.

3rd. Jesus, when receiving St. John's baptism, wished to endorse His sanctified precursor's mission, and to make known that

He Himself was the Messiah announced by St. John, which the eternal Father endorsed when He declared at His baptism that He was "His well-beloved Son."

4th. There are other reasons, says St. Thomas, for this conduct of our divine Redeemer. First, as the Israelites had to pass through the waters of the river Jordan in order to enter the promised land, so too our Redeemer wished to be baptised by St. John in that river, to signify that no one could ever enter heaven, the real land of promise, save through the waters of the new baptism, which He that day instituted. Second, as the prophet Elias divided the waters of the river Jordan before he was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot, so likewise heaven is opened by the fire of the Holy Ghost to those only who pass through the waters of the sacrament of baptism.

What is that remarkable event which happened at the baptism of Jesus?

As He submitted to an extreme humiliation by receiving the baptism of St. John, and appearing a sinner in the midst of the waters, the eternal Father desired to exalt Him by many miracles. 1st. The heavens opened above to show that through Jesus they would be soon opened to man, that the Christian's life ought to be signally holy, that the heaven of the blessed is open to us through baptism, that we become heirs to heaven by baptism, and that the only object of our desires should be the everlasting glories of this most beautiful kingdom. 2nd. The Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the form of a dove, to signify that He contained the plenitude of all gifts and graces, that we become by baptism temples of the Holy Ghost, that we ought to live according to His Spirit, and that He ought to be the soul of our souls. 3rd. The eternal Father declared in clarion voice that this was His well-beloved Son in whom He placed all His affections, and this declaration was somewhat necessary to manifest the divinity of His Son, so that the doctrines he was soon to announce would be received with more obedience and respect. This extraordinary event points out to us that we become by baptism the adopted children of God, and thus making with Jesus only one Son of God.

EJACULATION TO JESUS IN THE MYSTERIES OF HIS HIDDEN LIFE AND BAPTISM.

O my adorable Jesus, how many wonders, virtues, and truths spring up in my soul when I contemplate you in your hidden life.

My dear Lord, how truthfully the prophet said that you were a hidden God. You have been from all eternity hidden from the world in the bosom of your Father; you have been hidden in all the figures and all the shadowings of the Old Law; you came at last when the time of your coming was accomplished; and you took up your dwelling for nine months in the chaste womb of your virgin Mother, Mary. You have concealed your divinity in the shivering frame of a little infant, and you passed your entire childhood, up to your twelfth year, almost unknown. If you made known your knowledge and your wisdom in the temple, it was only for a few hours, because you lived afterwards in retirement, at Nazareth with Joseph and your most holy Mother.

And why, dear Lord, did you go to live at Nazareth? Was it to make yourself known as the expected Messiah, and the desired of so many ages? Did you go there to work your glorious miracles, or to announce there your renowned gospel? No, my meek and humble Redeemer, you went there to live hidden and unknown to the world. Oh, what examples of virtue do you not give us in this holy state! Let us go in spirit into this poor house at Nazareth, and look into the workshop where everything around breathes and inspires humility, poverty, simplicity, and an entire contempt for the pomp and vanities of this world; where silence, charity, and peace reign supreme; where everything is done without bustle, noise, or confusion, and where all is conducted in the most tranquil and admirable order.

In this celestial but humble dwelling we find a man-God, the Master of the universe, the Son of the Most High, Him whom the angels adore and obey, we find Him submissive and obedient to Joseph and Mary, his most pure Mother. There we see Him to whom this earth and all it contains belong, labouring with the sweat of His brow to gain a living, and discharging by hard work the penances imposed on sinful man. O my God, make me love the hidden and unknown life, so that I may be able to banish from my heart this itching I feel to appear and to be seen by this world, to live in fashionable society and in attractive employments; grant that I may always love to dwell in retirement, as in a place of sweet repose, and as in an asylum and assured haven. Keep me, dear Lord, so hidden in the secrecy of your countenance, that my soul may dwell in your bosom, retired and sheltered in you and in herself. My Saviour and my God, you had no need to hide yourself from the world, because you came to make yourself known to it in order to

save it but you wished by this great example of your humility to teach and instruct us how necessary it is to prepare ourselves for it by a long retreat, particularly when we are destined for the awful functions of priesthood.

Alas! how many persons have we seen who would have been well able to sanctify themselves in the retirement of an obscure and unknown life, and who were seduced and deceived by the appearance of a brilliant intellect, or some false zeal for external employment, and were, as a consequence, miserably lost. Lord, teach the poor, and us also, to hide and to regard ourselves as criminals condemned to labour and suffering; teach us that this is the surest and most proper state to secure our salvation, that it is the best way to preserve and increase the grace received in the soul-saving waters of baptism, which you have sanctified by being baptised in them. In this sacrament I have received the august and sublime title of child of God; there I have had the happiness to become the temple of the Holy Ghost, and there I received the grand prerogative of a citizen of heaven. How easily I could preserve those grand and precious graces in solitude and retirement. I left this tranquil and happy life, my God, full of those graces, and scarcely had I come into the world and its associations than I lost all. Who, O Lord, will give me wings to fly and follow you into retirement, and to weep there with you? Grant, beloved Jesus, that I may live always on this earth as a stranger and an unknown man, that all my occupations and inclinations may be to please you, and that I may lead a hidden life in you, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, up to the hour of the manifestation of all things. Amen.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS IN THE DESERT, AND ON THE TRANSFIGURATION.

What mystery follows after the baptism of Jesus?

Jesus, always devoted to our instruction, and to give us examples of all kinds of virtues, was conducted, very soon after His baptism, by the Holy Ghost, into the desert, which was convenient to Jerusalem, and where He had no better home than that of the brute beasts inhabiting that profound solitude. There He spent forty days and as many nights in an unbroken fast, because He wished to humble His innocent flesh by hunger and thirst; and after a fast so rigorous, the

devil, always hostile to every sort of sanctity, and curious to know if He were the Son of God, came to tempt Him. But Jesus triumphed over this enemy, and, after confounding and conquering him, obliged him to retire.

Is there anything worthy of our notice in the temptation of Jesus?

Yes, there are five or six important things to be considered in this mystery. 1st. Why Jesus retired into the desert immediately after His baptism. 2nd. Why He permitted Himself to be tempted. 3rd. The place in which He was tempted. 4th. The length of time He allowed Himself to be under temptation. 5th. The nature of those temptations. And 6th. The means He used to overcome them. All these points merit our attention and consideration.

1st. He was led after His baptism into the desert by the Holy Ghost, to teach us that the Holy Spirit, whom we received at our baptism, does not lead us to display ourselves to the world, nor before assemblies where the spirit of this wicked age abounds, but into retirement and solitude, as the most proper place to preserve our innocence, which can be so easily destroyed in a world where so many evils conspire against us.

2nd. He permitted Himself to be tempted to teach us, His disciples and children, that we shall be tempted, during our sojourn here on earth, and that the devil, our enemy, ever anxious for our ruin, and envious at our spiritual well-being, will omit no scheme to effect our fall, and that he will assail with more fury and violence those who are more advanced, and striving to advance, in holiness and perfection; but our consolation is that Jesus merited, by His victory over the demon, grace to conquer him likewise. Although Jesus never had, nor could have, the shadow of an inclination or desire to sin such as we have, still the fact that He permitted Himself to suffer temptations should animate and encourage us to combat and conquer them whenever assailed by them. It is right to remember that the temptations to which Jesus exposed Himself were external to His most holy soul. He allowed the devil to suggest objects of temptation to Him, but He could not be tempted, like us, by concupiscence, or that unfortunate inclination which seduces us to sin, and which was transmitted to us through original sin. Jesus was sanctity itself, and hence was perfectly exempt not only from original sin, but from concupiscence and its consequence as well. But He wished to show us, by the example of His temptations, how to act in the battle which the devil and concupiscence are continually waging against us.

3rd. He wished to be tempted in the desert to show all who are called to a life of retirement that although they are exempt from the temptations of the world, they are not sheltered against those of the devil, for he is the dragon mentioned in the Apocalypse, who discharges from his mouth a flood to submerge the woman who retired into the desert. No place, or state, or age, is free from temptations. It is true, we can triumph more easily over the devil in solitude than elsewhere, because we pray there with more fervour and recollection, and because the flesh is more severely mortified there, and the senses less exposed. But if we wish to conquer the devil, we must take great care that it is the Holy Spirit, and not self-will, that conducts us into solitude. Jesus was led by the Holy Ghost into the desert to sanctify those vast solitudes, which were one day to become the dwelling-place of so many solitaries; and He was banished there also to do penance for our sins, with which He was loaded.

4th. It was after forty days and as many nights' fast when His body was emaciated, and a short time before He commenced His mission amongst men, that He allowed Himself to be tempted; and, no doubt, He acted so to teach us that we are never so able to overcome temptations, and to triumph over the devil, than when we labour to bring our bodies under subjection, and when those bodies are weakened by penitential austerities. In this sense we can say that we are never stronger than when we are weak; and it is only when we have conquered our bodies by mortification, and proved ourselves by temptations, that we can appear in public, and preach the gospel for the glory of Jesus, who always preached self-denial, the cross, mortification, and a continual death to ourselves. We must confess that a man who comes forth from the desert strengthened by fasting, by penance, and by prayer; a man experienced in the art of combatting and conquering the devil, and having in his hands the weapons with which he defeated His enemies, we must confess that when such a man comes forth to preach the evangelical truths to the world, he merits to be attentively heard. This is how Jesus came forth to preach, and it is after this kind of preparation that all preachers ought to begin their missionary functions.

5th. Let us still consider the nature of those temptations which Jesus, our Divine Master, allowed Himself to suffer. It is a spectacle very astonishing, indeed, to see Jesus solicited by the devil to adore him; to see this stainless Lamb of God one time transported through the air, and placed upon the pinnacle of the temple at Jerusalem, and at another time upon a high mountain, where this angel

of darkness strives to induce Him to kneel down and adore him. This enemy of man tempts the Redeemer at first through the pleasures of the senses, by soliciting Him to work a miracle to satisfy His hunger; and he tempts Him through pride and vainglory, by asking Him to cast Himself down from the pinnacle, saying that His angels would sustain and preserve Him; and finally he tempts Him with the goods and riches of this world, by showing Him all the kingdoms of this earth, and the glory in connection with them. Those three sources of temptation are equally dangerous to us, because through them we are carried away, by the pleasures of the senses, to the pride of life and the desire of riches. These are the foundations on which the wicked and criminal Babylon of this world are built, and they are the cause of all the crime abounding in this life.

6th. The means adopted by our Redeemer to conquer the devil are well worthy of our attention, because he merely employed the Word of God to conquer, saying to Satan: "It is written, not in bread alone does man live, but in every word that cometh from the mouth of God." The devil made use of the Word of God to tempt our Redeemer, and He made use of the same to conquer the devil. We should learn from the example of Jesus that when we are prepared for the combat by retirement, prayer, and penance, and when the hour for battle has arrrived, we must be ready to oppose the buckler of faith, the truths of religion, and the Word of God to whatever the devil and the world would propose or present to us. This is the spiritual sword which we should have always in hand to fight and conquer the devil, who often transforms himself into an angel of light, and then uses the Word of God to seduce and corrupt us. This was the plan he adopted to darken the intellects and corrupt the hearts of those unfortunate heretics who in every age fell away from the Church, and scandalised the faithful. Therefore, we must watch and fear this insidious foe, so wicked and artful as to make use of the arms to conquer us which God gave us to conquer him. This divine word teaches us that all the pleasures of the body are ephemeral, that to live according to the flesh is to be dead in the sight of God, that all the grandeur and glory which men possess are only smoke, and will vanish like it; that all the riches of this world cannot satisfy the heart of man, and that we cannot desire to be rich without falling into the snares of Satan.

What is the mystery of the Transfiguration, and what are the principal circumstances connected with it?

We have just now contemplated Jesus a captive in the power of

a demon, His body enfeebled by the rigours of a long fast, and now we behold Him on Mount Thabor, invested with celestial light and glory. He took three of His apostles—Peter, James, and John—to the top of this mountain, the highest in Palestine, and distant from Nazareth about six miles, and there He was so transfigured before them that His countenance appeared brilliant as the sun, and His garments white as snow. The eyes of the apostles were so dazzled, and their hearts so overwhelmed with joy at all they saw, that they were almost unmanned, and forthwith Peter desired to fix his future dwelling amidst this delightful scene. This transfiguration was not so much a miracle as the cessation of a great miracle; for the union of the divine and human natures should naturally cause this emanation of splendour and glory on the body of Jesus. But this divine Saviour suspended, or rather concealed this attribute of glory in order to carry out the designs of His eternal Father, which were to save mankind through the life and labours of His Son, and through the ignominy of His cross; none of which could be accomplished if that adorable Son had always allowed the natural splendours of His glorified body to appear even as partially developed as on this interesting occasion. Moses and Elias appeared conversing with Jesus, touching His future mission and sufferings; and when those two great saints had disappeared, the eternal Father spoke down from on high, and said: "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear you Him." The apostles, overwhelmed with fright and fear at the thrilling tones of the Omnipotent's voice, fell prostrate on the earth, and Jesus approached and touched them, saying, "Arise," and when they arose they saw no one but Jesus.

What instruction ought we to draw from all the circumstances of this grand mystery?

All the events of this mystery teach us such salutary things that we should make them the subject of our frequent and serious consideration.

1st. Jesus wishes to teach us that it is in solitude, in prayer, and in separation from the world that He generally communicates Himself in the most vivid and sensible manner, and that it is there one can taste those sweet and delightful consolations which impress the soul with an oblivion and contempt for all worldly pleasures, such as St. Peter felt amidst the splendours of Thabor.

2nd. Jesus wished to be transfigured in order to fortify the apostles, and in them all Christians, in the belief of His Divinity, notwithstanding all they were to see of His sufferings, His humiliations, and His death.

3rd. When Jesus manifested on this occasion a little of His glories to His apostles, He wished to animate them, and us also, to suffer and endure everything in the hope of gaining that recompense for our labours—the glory of seeing our now vile and abject bodies invested with a brilliancy so like His own, as to make them shine brighter than ten thousand suns.

4th. The presence of Moses and Elias on the mountain speaking with Jesus demonstrates to us that He is the centre, the plenitude, and the end of the law and the prophets; that Moses and the prophets had spoken of Him, and of His death; and that, consequently, we should seek Him alone in the law and the prophets.

5th. God made known in this mystery the memorable truth that nothing pleases Him but Jesus, in whom He had placed all His affections; that through Him He loves, compassionates, and saves us; and that we cannot perform anything agreeable to Him except through this His well-beloved Son. He tells us also that we must hear His Son Jesus as His eternal Word, and as the ambassador and interpreter of His will. He tells us that His Son speaks to us externally through the Sacred Scriptures, through all His creatures, and through all events and occurrences; and that He speaks to us from within by His grace and truths, which are the lights that illumine our souls.

6th. The fact that the apostles saw only Jesus after the Transfiguration, teaches us to accustom ourselves to seek and to see Him alone, as the being in whom we can find the plenitude of grace, of truth, and of the Divinity, and Him in whom we will find all things for time and eternity.

EJACULATION TO JESUS ON THE MYSTERY OF HIS TEMPTATION IN THE DESERT, AND ON HIS TRANSFIGURATION ON MOUNT THABOR.

O Jesus, banished from amongst men who were not worthy of you, I adore you in that lonely desert into which you were conducted by the Holy Ghost. What kind of life did you lead there, and how were you occupied? In that desert your stainless flesh, my dear Lord, suffered hunger and thirst; your most holy soul was buried in a profound and heavenly sorrow; you wept and prayed alone, and, carrying upon you the sins of the whole world, you were humbled and afflicted for us; you remembered those who forgot you, you loved those who despised you, you did penance for those who offended you, and you prepared future deserts to be the happy dwellings of so many

holy solitaries. O life hidden and retired from all worldly converse, how agreeable art thou, and yet how lonely and repulsive you appear to worldlings.

Oh, how happy I would be now if, immediately after my baptism, I entered into some solitude, and carried with me there the unsullied treasure of my innocence. It is time to retire into solitude from this sinful world, and to begin to repair the harm I have done, and to heal the terrible wounds which sin inflicted upon my soul. It is time to follow the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, inviting me daily to live in retirement with you, my Jesus, to weep with you, to do penance with you, and to repair there the ruin which sin has caused in me, His temple. My Jesus and my Redeemer, you see that I am exposed to continual temptation, for no state, or age, or condition is free from them. The world, the devil, and the flesh are waging an unmitigated warfare on me, my passions harass and afflict me, penance frequently becomes distasteful, and fills me with tepidity and disgust. I am always fighting, and yet never sure of victory. One enemy retires to make way for the assault of another, and whilst I am glorying in my victory over one, I find myself conquered by another. Sinful excesses are ever present to my senses, striving to rouse up my ambitious pride, and exalt me to the highest pinnacle of the temple of pleasure.

They persuade me to appear in public, they strive to elevate me in order to cast me down, and the world displays all its riches and its glories to me, and nearly persuades me to love them and to fall down and adore them. The devil makes use of the Word of God to corrupt the purity of my faith and my morals, and through his false interpretation of it I sometimes find myself on the very verge of the precipice. What will become of me, dear and adorable Master, if you will not teach me the art of overcoming so many different and trying temptations, and if you yourself will not triumph in me?

Sustain me, Lord Jesus, with your grace, clothe me with the arms of justice, give me a great love of holy prayer, of penance, and for your divine word. May I never cease to put all my confidence and all my consolation in you, my Jesus, who refused not to be tempted for love of me, that the spirit of penance and mortification may keep me always in subjection, that the spirit of poverty may disengage my heart from every desire for the riches of this world. May the hope of the riches to come cause me to despise those of the present, and may your love keep me so perfectly united to thee that nothing will be able to separate me from you. It is just, my

dear Redeemer, that after having contemplated you in the desert, where you have been so humiliated, I should go up into Thabor to contemplate you in your glory.

What a difference between your appearance and condition in those two solitudes. In the first I see your innocent body humbled and emaciated by the austerity of a forty days' fast, and on Thabor I see this very body all brilliant in its celestial glory. In the desert you had no other company than the brute beasts and uninhabited wilds, and on Thabor you were conversing with two of the greatest saints of the Old Law, and with the three chiefs of your apostolate. The devil transports you, in the desert, to a very high mountain to tempt you with the glories of this world which he pictured before you, and on Thabor your give us a glimpse of the glories of Heaven, in order to draw us to you by the hope of hereafter possessing it; you conversed in the desert with Satan, and on Thabor with Moses and Elias; in the desert you concealed your divinity from Satan, and on Thabor your eternal Father proclaims to mankind that you are His well-beloved Son, in whom He has placed all His affections.

In the desert you appeared a mere man doing penance, and on Thabor you appeared in your real character—a true God, or rather a man-God invested with immortality and glory. O my divine Saviour, how worthy of admiration you appear in all these different states; you wished to suffer temptation to cheer and comfort me when I am suffering from them; and to animate my hope you discovered to me the glory you will give to all who shall follow your humiliation to the end. You fasted most rigorously to teach me to mortify my body, and your face became more brilliant than the sun to give me the hope that I shall be conformable to you in glory if I shall be so in suffering. Grant me the great favour, my Lord and my God, to follow you in everything, and to love you with the same love with which your Father loves you. Grant that I may love and fix all my affections in you alone, that I may find no peace, repose, or consolation but with you and meditating on your laws, the prophets, and the gospel. O my divine Jesus, may you ever be the end and the centre of all my desires, as you have been the object of the yearnings of the saints of the Old Law, and that it shall ever be my joy to hear you and to follow you in time and eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE MYSTERY OF THE PUBLIC LIFE OF JESUS.

WHAT kind was the public life which Jesus led when He appeared before this world?

The public life of Jesus embraces—1st. The miracles which He performed. 2nd. The doctrines He taught. 3rd. The life He led in connection with His Father, Himself, and with His neighbours. What are the miracles which Jesus worked, why did He work them, and what do those different miracles teach us?

Jesus performed many kinds of miracles—He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and activity to the lame; He healed the leper and the paralytic, He delivered those possessed by demons, He raised the dead to life, and cured countless maladies. All these were foretold by the prophets as so many marks of the true Messiah, and Christ performed them either to prove that He was sent by His Father, or to confirm His doctrines, or to establish His Divinity, all of which it was necessary to have well proved. The omnipotence, the goodness, and the mercy of Jesus shine admirably bright in all those miracles—His omnipotence, because they were performed by a single act of His will, or by a single word from His lips; His goodness and mercy, because He not only delivered the afflicted from their corporal maladies, but gave them faith and forgiveness of their sins as well; and they contain a great fund of instruction for us likewise.

They teach us that what Jesus performed upon the bodies of those He cured, He daily operates upon our souls, because all the evils from which He delivered men were not only the punishments of sin, but figures of it as well. This divine Saviour gives sight to the man blinded by sin, when He makes him know and love the truth; He gives hearing to the spiritually deaf, when He gives them a taste for the divine word, and when He makes them attentive to the interior voice of grace; He makes the spiritually lame walk with a firm and steady step the entire journey to heaven; He cures the corruption of their hearts, disfigured by the leprosy of sin; He raises them from the death of sin into which they had fallen; He makes them live according to His life; and He gives them His body, which He multiplies, to nourish and satiate them; He delivers them from the servitude of the demons who held them captive; and He demolishes in them the despotism of their passions, which, like inter-

mittent fever, makes them sickly and languishing. Let us learn from these afflicted people to do for our spiritual health what they did for their corporal infirmities; and let us live, after our spiritual cure, as they lived after their corporal cure.

What is the doctrine which Jesus taught to man?

Never was doctrine so beautiful and sublime, so useful and holy, nor so appropriate to the necessities of man, as that which Jesus, our Lord and King, has taught. It regulates our spirit by teaching all it ought to believe, and in what manner it ought to judge of all visible and invisible things; it regulates our hearts by teaching them what they ought to love, to hate, and to despise; it rules our exterior by teaching us what we ought to do, and what we ought to avoid, what we ought to say, when we should be silent, and how we should conduct ourselves in all things. It is a doctrine all divine, because Jesus has taught only what he learned from His Father; it is a doctrine all holy, because it elevates man from this earth, and unites him to God; it is a doctrine up to that time unknown to mankind—a doctrine which taught men to know themselves and to know God—a doctrine which brought peace to the soul, exposed its miseries to it, and which discovered the means to heal them, and to teach mankind how to be truly happy.

What kind of life has Jesus led with regard to His Father, Himself, and His neighbour?

1st. His life, with regard to His Father, has been one of never-ceasing adoration, always exact in doing His will in every way, always depending on Him, seeking His glory in all things, and in all His actions making that glory known to all men, and teaching them in what manner they ought to adore and serve Him. He was always zealous for His Father's interests, defending Him against all who had profaned His temple and abused His law by false appearances of piety; and all He suffered was only to satisfy the offended justice of His Father.

2nd. The life which Jesus led with regard to Himself has been one of poverty, humility, and mortification, and a life opposed to the three sources of sin—namely, the love of earthly goods, and honours, and the pleasures of the senses. Jesus has condemned all these by His poverty, His humility, His mortification, and His penitential life. 1. He condemned them by His poverty, for He said He had not whereon to lay His head, and because everything connected with Him breathed modesty and simplicity. 2. He condemned them by His humility, because he fled when the Jews

wished to make Him king, and whenever He performed some astounding miracle, and because His chief delight was to humble Himself and to be humbled by others. 3. He condemned them by His penitential life, because He mortified His innocent flesh, and regarded the cross as the true road on which men should travel back to His Father. In Him we see all the Christian virtues as in a mirror; peace and serenity are in His looks, none but words of eternal life escape from His mouth, the unction of the Holy Ghost appeared in all His discourses, He acted without bustle or precipitation, because His soul was always lifted up and united to God. As He was to be the model for all men, His life should be a mixture of action and contemplation. He became a solitary in order to be the model of solitaries, He fasted in order to become the model of penitence, and sometimes He led an ordinary life—eating, drinking, and acting in the world—in order to teach those living in it how to act so as to be saved.

3rd. The life which Jesus led with regard to His neighbour was full of charity, patience, and sweetness, and always prepared to act mercifully. No one ever heard Him dispute, or the sound of His voice in the streets. He never refused to receive anyone who approached Him, and always appeared ready to do good to everyone. He ate with publicans and with people of questionable repute, in order to teach and induce them to believe Him; He was always merciful, compassionate, good, and affable to all without any dissimulation; He was sincere to all, and spoke the truth without offending any one. He loved the poor most tenderly, permitted little children to freely approach Him, and always received them with affectionate tenderness; and in Him the wretched, the unhappy, and the afflicted found a compassionate friend, who relieved their sufferings and comforted them with the sweetness of His words. He lived with His disciples as one of themselves, bearing their defects and frailties with charity and forbearance, and on many occasions He evinced kindness even for Judas. He conversed with men in every way suitable to their condition, making Himself all to all to gain all. No sinner ever found Him in any way sharp or repulsive. An universal charity for the rich and the poor, for the great and the humble, was His distinguishing characteristic, and at last He gave His life to save all.

EJACULATION TO JESUS IN THE MYSTERY OF HIS PUBLIC LIFE.

At last, O my divine Jesus, you manifest yourself to the world, because you appear in public and live amongst men. It was necessary, in order to accomplish the designs you had in view when you became man, that your holy life should not continue hidden and unknown. I admire all you have said and done in your public life. Grant that all may serve to fortify my faith, to instruct me, and to regulate the whole conduct of my life.

I admire and adore your omnipotence and goodness displayed in the great and numerous miracles you performed to prove your divinity and the truth of your doctrine. Neither maladies the most inveterate, nor demons, nor death, nor the corruption of the grave, could resist your omnipotent will. O my Jesus, my all-powerful and infinitely good God, who but you alone could work these wonders?

My soul is more sick than the afflicted persons you have cured, more dead than all you have raised to life, and more enslaved than all the possessed you have delivered. Do to my soul what you did for those afflicted bodies whose maladies are figures of my spiritual evils. It is spiritually blind, enlighten it with your divine light; it is deaf, make it hear and love your truths; it is dumb, teach it to speak of you and of you alone; it is lame, reform its movements and regulate its progress on the pathway of justice, so that it may travel the whole way without turning to the right or the left. Heal, O Lord, that terrible leprosy which sin has brought upon my soul; she writhes under the tyranny of the evil one, rescue her from the powers of darkness, and bring her into your heavenly kingdom. Amen.

FOURTH INSTRUCTION.

ON THE MYSTERIES OF JESUS FROM HIS PASSION TO THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE MYSTERIES OF THE PASSION AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.

What is the mystery of the passion of Jesus?

It is one which merits our most serious attention and reflection; because there is no other that makes better known the enormity of sin and the love of God for us. What a spectacle to behold the man-God, innocent and without stain, and higher than the heavens, suffering all kinds of torments as if He were the most wicked and the last

of mankind; and yet faith teaches us that He desired to suffer all this in the human nature to which He united Himself.

What were the sufferings which Jesus endured?

He suffered first from all sorts of persons, from Jews and Gentiles, from princes and their subordinates, from judges and executioners, from kings and peoples, from priests and Pharisees, from strangers and those of His own country, and even from those of His own household—from His disciples, one of whom sold and betrayed Him, another denied Him, and all abandoned Him; and finally He suffered from His Father, who deserted Him on the cross. This divine Saviour carried all the sins of the world upon Him, and, loaded with its iniquities, He desired to suffer and to die for all.

2nd. He endured torture of every kind—He suffered in his friendship, because He was abandoned by his friends; He suffered in His honour, because He was mocked at, covered with injuries and insults, overwhelmed with opprobrium and all kinds of outrage; He suffered in His reputation, because He was calumniated, accused of horrible blasphemies, belied by suborned witnesses, and made appear a seducer of the people, and a murderer was preferred before him; He suffered in His property, because He was stripped and robbed of His clothes, poor though they were.

3rd. He suffered in all parts of His being—His soul was overwhelmed with fear and sadness, and every member of His body endured some special and particular pain. His head was crowned with thorns, His face besmeared with spittle, and blackened with many blows; His mouth was drenched with gall and vinegar, His ears assailed with blasphemies, and His hands and feet pierced with huge nails. His whole body was in agony while being scourged, His shoulders were loaded with the heavy wood of the cross. He suffered all this cruel punishment, and then He died for us, because he wished it.

What fruit should we draw from all these sufferings of Jesus?

We should learn from them that the life of the Christian ought to be one of continual mortification, and that he ought to embrace, in peace and submission, the contempt and bad treatment, the insults and railleries, the false judgments and injustices, the calumnies, persecutions, and betrayals of his neighbours and friends; and even if God so disposed it, to die on the gibbet, and to be treated as a wicked and abandoned outcast. We are obliged to endure all this, because we are the children of a suffering and crucified God, and members of an outraged and humiliated Redeemer, "who suffered for us, leaving us an

example that we should follow His steps, who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not, but delivered Himself to him who judged Him unjustly."[1] Behold what a grand model of patience, humility, submission, and meekness we are bound to imitate. If we cast only a single glance on Jesus, the author and the consummator of our faith, He will animate us to suffer and forbear, because we will see that He suffered upon the cross, and preferred the shame and ignominy of it to a tranquil and happy life, which He could easily have led. What subject and motive more comforting could we desire in our sufferings and humiliations, than "to think diligently upon Him that endured such opposition Himself from sinners?"[2] This is the grand object which should rouse and encourage us not to fall into dejection, because however great our sufferings may be, they cannot be compared to those of our Divine Master, our King and Saviour, and because if we are His true disciples and servants, we should feel too happy to suffer like Him, particularly when we remember how very lately we have been sinners.

What happened to Jesus after He had been so outraged and badly treated at Jerusalem?

He was unjustly condemned to death, hurried up the rugged heights of Calvary, with the hard and heavy wood of the cross upon His bleeding shoulders; was then nailed to it, and three hours after expired on it for our salvation, and as the victim of propitiation for our sins, and even for the sins of those who crucified Him. The death of Jesus was the consummation and accomplishment of all the figures, prophecies, and sacrifices of the Old Law. It was the end of the anger, the envy, the cruelty, and the injustice of man, and the consummation of the sufferings and the love of Jesus. This God made man wished to die to give glory to His Father, to satisfy His infinite justice by His sufferings, which were of infinite value because He was God, and He died to make men understand how much He loved them: "For it is in that," says St. Paul, "that God commendeth His charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us according to the time."[3]

What advantages have we gained by the death of Jesus?

It is impossible to enumerate them, because by His death we merited all the goods and graces attainable from religion. The death of Jesus delivered us from the servitude of Satan, which sin brought upon us, by it we were emancipated from that hell which our sins de-

[1] 1 Peter ii. 21, 22, 23. [2] Heb. xii. 3. [3] Rom. v. 8.

served, by it our sins were washed away in His blood. That death destroyed our sins, and effaced the handwriting of death against us. It opened heaven, and gave us hope to enter there. Through it we found a victim powerful enough to satisfy God for our sins, a victim which sanctified us, and hence fully reconciled us to His offended Father. Through His death we were able to discover the fountain of grace and mercy, and through it we were able to practise virtue and win eternal glory. By the immolation of this Lamb of God, our souls, purpled in His blood, were saved from eternal death, and delivered, as the Jews were from Pharaoh, from the slavery of the devil. The day of His death is the day of the grand Christian jubilee, figured by the Jewish one, when slaves obtained their liberty, and received back the goods and privileges they formerly possessed.

What fruits should the death of Jesus produce in us?

We should draw—1st. Eternal salvation; but, alas, how few will gain this grand reward, because the Council of Trent declared that though Jesus died for all, still all will not reap the fruits of His death.

2nd. The death of Jesus should make us know the enormity of sin, because sin was the cause of it, and required the sacrifice of a man-God to expiate and pardon it.

3rd. We ought to hate the world and its maxims, because Jesus condemned them on the cross, and because "He delivered Himself to death," as St. Paul says, "to withdraw us from the corruption of the present age."[1]

4th. We should nevermore live for ourselves, but for Jesus only, "who died," says St. Paul, "in order that those who live may no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them."[2] He has purchased a sovereign right over our souls, our bodies, and our actions, by the infinite value of His blood, which He poured forth for them in order to make us like Himself, and hence to live for Him alone.

5th. We should never again permit our concupiscence to rule us, for "our old man has been crucified with Jesus, in order that the body of sin may be destroyed, and that we may serve sin no longer;"[3] that is, the concupiscence within us.

6th. We ought to be attached to the cross with Jesus, "carrying His mortification in our mortal flesh, and announcing the death of the Lord until He shall come," for this is the fruit which He wishes us to draw from it; and he declared so before He died, when He said: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself."[4]

[1] Gal. i. 4. [2] 2 Cor. v. 15. [3] Rom. vi. 6. [4] John, xii. 32.

7th. In fine, we should regard Christ crucified as our true wisdom, and as the power and virtue of God, for "the word of the cross is folly to those who are lost, and for those who are saved it is the power of God."[1] Behold the great and admirable effects which Christ crucified should produce in us. Let us not deceive ourselves, for we are His only when we are crucified and dead with Him; and hence St. Paul says that "all who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with their vices and concupiscences."[2]

EJACULATION TO JESUS ON THE MYSTERIES OF HIS PASSION AND DEATH.

O Jesus, my Saviour, God and man, Son of the Most High, word of God, the splendour of His glory and the figure of His substance, eternal, omnipotent, immense, and infinite, is it you that has suffered so many outrages and humiliations? Is it you, the Messiah, the expected for so many ages, the light of all nations, the glory of Israel, sanctity and innocence itself, is it you that has been treated as the last of men, and ranked amongst the wicked? Yes, my divine Saviour, I believe that you suffered so many sorrows, and that you became the outcast of men for me. Ah, my Saviour, is it possible that I will not love you, who so much loved me; or is it possible that I will refuse to suffer anything for you, who suffered everything for me; or shall I ever again murmur or complain on account of any bad treatment I may have to suffer in the future?

If all men should persecute and rebel against me, if my friends and neighbours should abandon me, and if I should be delivered into the hands of my enemies, I shall feel happy when I remember you standing in the crowd, abandoned by all; and you suffered all this to purify me in your blood. I feel an extreme antipathy against humiliations and the cross; my pride, my self-love, and even my whole nature, rebels at the very appearance of them. Impress on my soul, dear Jesus, a love of contempt, of injuries, and of everything calculated to make me low and contemptible.

May I regard it as an honour and glory to be treated like you, and to be like you in every respect; that every one may trample me under foot, and treat me as a worm of this earth; that I may be overwhelmed with pain and sufferings, and all others preferred before me. I ought to adore you and be silent, and yet I have abused your goodness and your excessive love; I have rendered all the labours and sufferings you endured for me useless for my salvation. Ah, dear Lord, do not

[1] 1 Cor. i. 18. [2] Gal. v. 24.

permit this any more; and when you show me your wounds, each of which is a fountain of salvation, grant through your great mercy that I may sincerely begin to profit by all this goodness, that I may die to myself and to the whole world, and that I may glory in your cross alone, that I may know in the future only Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, in order that He may be all my wisdom and all my strength, my consolation in suffering, my hope under humiliations, my peace in all troubles, my riches in poverty, my resource and my help in all my necessities, my joy in sadness, my salvation, and my glory in heaven. Amen.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE MYSTERIES OF THE SEPULTURE AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

What is the mystery of the burial of our Lord Jesus Christ?

When Jesus was dead, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, two of His disciples, demanded and obtained His body from Pilate; they embalmed it, according to the Jewish custom, in perfumes of great value, they enveloped it in fine linen, and placed it in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, and in which no one was before interred. Then they rolled a large stone to the mouth of this grave, and Pilate, at the request of the Jews, had the imperial seal fixed upon it. Then he placed a guard over it, lest the disciples should come and steal away the body of Jesus. All these precautions were inadvertently made to prove and fully establish the truth of Christ's resurrection.

What fruits should we draw from the burial of Jesus?

St. Paul tells us that "we have been buried in our baptism with Christ Jesus."[1] In these words he alludes to the manner in which baptism was administered when the person to be baptised was plunged entirely into the water, to signify—1st. The burial and resurrection of Jesus. 2nd. To point out that all our sins are buried in baptism, that the old man is buried in this sacrament, and that he who is baptised becomes a new man. 3rd. To indicate that a Christian should be as one dead on this earth, and as one buried and hidden from this world; that he ought to preserve himself in the purity and sanctity which he received in this sacrament, and to fly from the corruption of this world, which he is so negligent in avoiding. 4th. If God called him into solitude he should be there like Christ in the tomb—incorruptible and embalmed in the good odour of Jesus

[1] Coloss. ii. 12.

and the unction of the Holy Ghost, who will preserve his soul and body sound and uncorrupted by sin, and he should be there as in a rock, firm and constant in his vocation. This rock is also a figure of Jesus, whom St. Paul compares to a stone; and in the centre of this stone, that is in the wounds of Jesus, the true solitary should dig out his sepulchre and conceal himself from the world. He must place a guard around this grave, and watch over himself without ceasing, so that no creature can enter into his solitude, nor interrupt his contemplation and recollection in God. His tomb should be sealed with the impress of the Holy Ghost, and in this state he should remain in peace till it should please God to call him from his retreat to the kingdom of glory.

What should we believe touching the resurrection of Jesus?

We ought to believe that the soul of Jesus, which was separated by death from His body, was reunited to it on the third day, and that He came forth from the tomb invested with immortality, and glory, and victorious over death, the world, the devil, and all His enemies. In truth, it was foretold by the prophets that His sepulchre would be glorious, that God would not leave His soul in limbo, and that He would not suffer the most holy body of His Son to undergo the corruption of the grave.

How do we know that Christ has risen?

We are assured by all the proofs which could raise a fact to the highest degree of certainty and evidence. 1st. The very precautions of His enemies attest His resurrection: because they sealed the tomb, placed a guard of soldiers around it, and employed every means to prevent His disciples from stealing away the body of their Master. His enemies, so powerful, so vigilant, and so interested, took good care not to be taken in or surprised.

2nd. The deposition of the soldiers which declared that whilst they slept the disciples came and stole away the body. But this deposition is most absurd, because they could not see whilst asleep what they attested, and hence the deposition demonstrates the resurrection of Christ, and dissipates its own assertion. The guards declared, moreover, that they found the grave open and empty immediately after sunrise on the third day after His death. Nothing could be more improbable than that His disciples stole away the body of Christ, because an entire guard of soldiers do not as a rule fall asleep at the same time, as if by mutual consent; besides their sleep could not be so profound nor so continuous that the noise, so inseparable from such a stealing, did not awaken

one or more of the soldiers, and thus frustrate an enterprise so foolish.

3rd. The apostles had no vivid hope that the promises of Christ touching His resurrection would be accomplished, and hence men so ignorant and so incredulous would be most unwilling to publish what they did not see or believe.

4th. Christ appeared to His disciples not only once, but frequently, and hence they could be satisfactorily convinced that these frequent appearances were not illusions. If He appeared in a passing or transitory way to them, it is possible that their imagination could picture a phantom of Him to their minds; but He appeared often to them during the forty days after His resurrection. These frequent manifestations were not in the midst of a cloud nor in the dim distance, for such as these could easily be illusions; but He appeared in the very midst of them, eating and drinking, open and clear to their eyes, and even they touched Him with their hands. He did not appear to one only, because such one could be over credulous, and therefore easily deceived, but He appeared to all in common and to many in particular.

5th. The unanimous evidence of the apostles is invested with all the motives of credibility calculated to establish a thorough conviction—First, because all deposed the same fact and avowed in the same manner their stupidity, their doubts, and their incredulity. Second, not one out of such a crowd of witnesses asserted a falsehood or contradicted another, and all died proclaiming the truth of what they saw. Third, they were disinterested witnesses, because they all abandoned Him during life, although they regarded Him as the Liberator promised by their fathers. They had no inducement to become His partisans, and yet they openly declared that He was risen, that they had seen Him; and they died on the rack, on the scaffold, and in the dungeon, professing and proclaiming His resurrection. If He were not risen, what interest could they have in publishing that He was? They exposed themselves to the cruelest of torments by publishing what they knew to be false. They deceived the whole human race, and they knew that their only reward would be everlasting punishment. To be sure, a false persuasion in matters of faith might impel some inhuman spirits to extraordinary excesses, but what kind of men could cheerfully brave all kinds of death to substantiate what they knew to be false; and who amongst them confessed, even in the midst of suffering, that his declaration was a falsehood, a fraud, or an imposition. To assert as a truth

what they knew at the gates of death to be false, would be a species of insanity of which men are not capable. Such a hallucination would be more incredible than the resurrection itself, which the incredulous desire so much to deny. Fourth, a fact so new and so extraordinary as the resurrection of Christ could not be confirmed by the apostles by multiplied miracles, and acknowledged by the whole world, if it were not a fact; and hence St. Augustine says: "If the resurrection of Christ be incredible, it is infinitely more so that the whole world could ackowledge such an incredulity without a proof."

What fruits should we draw from the resurrection of Christ, and what effects should it produce in us?

The mystery of the resurrection ought, in the first place, to strengthen our faith in all the other dogmas of religion, because if Christ be not risen, our faith would be useless and vain; but if he be risen, He is God, and all He has spoken is true, and must be believed. His religion is divine, moral, certain, and immutable, and hence there is another life, and we shall arise to enter into it.

2nd. This mystery should be the model of our resurrection from the death of sin to a life of grace; for, says St. Paul, "You know that Christ rising again from the dead dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him; for in that He died to sin, He died once, but in that He liveth, He lives unto God; so do you also reckon that you are indeed dead to sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus, our Lord."[1] It is necessary that we enter into a new life, and that we walk in it as well, living only in God, and never again to love the things of this world, but only those which are heavenly.

3rd. The mystery of Christ's resurrection should animate our hope, because St. Paul assures us that if Christ be risen, we also shall arise, that our corruptible bodies shall become incorruptible and conformable to His glorified body, that they shall be clothed with immortality, and with a glory never ending, provided we have imitated during life the sanctity of our Redeemer's life. The reprobate shall also arise, but only to be tortured in their bodies. Oh, what a strange and terrible difference. The followers of Jesus shall be brilliant as stars and sparkling with eternal light, and the reprobate shall be covered with shame and remorse. Everything in the reprobate will appear horrible and revolting, and in the elect everything will glitter with splendour and glory.

[1] Rom. vi. 9, 10, 11.

EJACULATION TO JESUS ON THE MYSTERIES OF HIS BURIAL AND RESURRECTION.

Continue, O my adorable Jesus, to impress upon my soul the spirit and the grace of your holy mysteries. In order to die to sin, I have been buried with you in baptism; but, alas, the sins submerged in those salutary waters, as if buried in a tomb, have come to life within me, and have bound me in their fatal chains. O my dear Jesus, may your sepulture still work in me those great and ineffable graces, so necessary for my salvation. Grant that it may cause me to die to all the irregular passions still dwelling within me; that I may never again appear in this world seeking the enjoyment of my vanities and my ambitions, that all my desires may incline me to hide and retire myself like some dead thing cast aside through fear of its corruption, and because of its uselessness, that I may forget in this separation everything belonging to this world, and that I may always long and love to be forgotten by it.

Happy for me if, like the grain of wheat cast into the earth, I could die, so as to produce afterwards works worthy of eternal life. O my amiable Saviour, you have been this grain of wheat, for you have been buried in this earth, and you rose up from it by your resurrection, and what glorious fruits you have borne. Nations have believed in you, many Jews were converted, and all this great and abundant harvest has sprung from you.

My divine Saviour, you died and rose again to rule over the living and the dead; you conquered all your enemies, and you triumphed also over our hardened hearts. Raise our souls by the power of your grace from the death of sin, in order that your resurrection may operate in me the grand and ineffable effects of this holy mystery; fill me with the spirit of your resurrected life, in order that I may never again relapse into the death of sin; make me enter upon a life entirely new, so that everything in me may be remodeled—my desires, my affections, my heart and my soul, in order that I may become such a new creature as never more to taste of the illicit things here below, and only of those on high.

Live in me, O my risen Jesus, and as you shall never die again, grant that I may live only in God, of God, and for God, and that when my body is dead, I can accept its death as the wages of sin, and as a homage which I present to the sovereignty of your being. But in this necessity of dissolution there is one thing to

comfort me—that my flesh shall repose in its grave with the hope of being one day invested with immortality and glory at the general resurrection of mankind. Amen.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION AND THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

WHAT is the mystery of the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven?

We believe in this mystery—that Jesus, after having established the truth of His resurrection by many evidences, and after giving the necessary powers and instructions to His apostles, ascended, by His own omnipotent power, into heaven, and is seated there on the right hand of His Father, as in the place of His eternal repose after the fatigues of His most laborious life, and where He shall continue to reign for ever on the throne of His own empire. We say that He is on the right hand of His Father, not because His Father, who is a spirit, could have a right or a left hand; but to enable us to comprehend that Christ, as God, is equal in every respect to His Father, and that as man He is supremely exalted, by the splendour of His power and glory, above all celestial beings, even those occupying the first place and rank in the kingdom of heaven. It was on Ascension Day that the humanity of Jesus, to which He united His divinity, took possession of eternal glory. It was on that day He entered into the true sanctuary as sovereign high priest, to offer His prayers to God His Father for us, to present to Him the blood of the victim which He had offered, and to continue for all eternity the office of Mediator between God and us.

Has the mystery of the ascension been prefigured in the Old Law and foretold by the prophets?

St. Paul says that the action of the high-priest entering once a-year into the holy of holies, and carrying the blood of the immolated victims, was a figure of Jesus entering into heaven after having been put to death for the redemption of mankind. The prophet Elias, who was taken into heaven and who will return to this earth at the end of the world, is likewise a figure of Jesus, who ascended into heaven and who will come again on earth at the end of time to judge the whole world. Holy David says: "The Lord in ascending on

high has led in triumph with Him a great number of captives,"[1] and again he says: "The Lord said to my Lord, sit on my right hand,"[2] and in his twenty-third psalm he says that "the eternal gates shall open and the King of Glory shall enter."

Is Jesus not on this earth as well as in heaven?

He is no longer on this earth in a visible manner, but He is invisibly here in two ways—1st. By His real and corporal presence in the adorable sacrament of the altar; because faith teaches that we receive there His body and blood, His soul and His divinity. 2nd. He is also on this earth by His grace, His spirit, and His special protection over the Church and her children.

What should the ascension of Christ produce in us?

1st. It ought to produce great sentiments of love and gratitude in us towards our Redeemer, who occupies for our good in heaven the office of mediator, advocate, and priest. 2nd. It should animate our hope, for when we are certain that Jesus entered heaven to open its gates and prepare a resting-place for us, we ought to hope in His promise that where He is we will hereafter be, if it be not our own fault, and that where the head is there also will be the members. 3rd. This mystery should inspire us with a great detachment from this world and elevate our hearts towards heaven, for "where our treasure is there also will be our hearts;" and hence our conversation ought to be in heaven, from whence we expect our Redeemer. The ascension should likewise teach us that we are already in heaven with Jesus, because our hearts and souls should dwell there by faith, and hope, and charity. 4th. This mystery should make us feel that heaven is our heritage and true country, because we should know that Jesus, our chief and brother, has gone to take possession of it for us, and that in future we ought to consider this earth as a pilgrimage and a place of exile, where we should weep and do penance, just as Christ said the disciples would do when the spouse would be taken away from them. We see in this mystery of the ascension that Christ our Lord, the spouse of our souls, has gone up into heaven from us in a visible manner, and that hence we should never feel happy till we see and securely possess Him in the kingdom of His glory.

What is the mystery of the descent of the Holy Ghost?

We believe that the Holy Ghost, the third person of the most holy Trinity, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, descended on Pentecost Sunday, ten days after our Redeemer's ascension, and

[1] Psalms, lxvii. [2] Psalms, cix.

that whilst the disciples, 120 in number, were congregated in the same room at Jerusalem, He sat upon them and infused into each of them His holy spirit. They retired into that room for the purpose of prayer and to await, as our Redeemer promised, to be invested with power from on high by the Comforter, the spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. On that Sunday they were filled with the spirit of the Holy Ghost, and saw realized the entire promise of the Saviour.

What change did the Holy Ghost produce in the disciples?

He changed them in such a way that those who knew them previously could hardly believe they were the same men—1st. Because their souls were filled with so vivifying a light that they could comprehend the profoundest truths of faith. 2nd. Because their hearts were penetrated and filled with the love, the zeal, the power, and the virtues of the living God. 3rd. Because they who were formerly rude, ignorant, feeble, and very imperfect men, received on that occasion the gift of understanding, and speaking different languages, and of working all kinds of miracles. Who but the Holy Ghost could effect this marvellous change in men so absolutely unfitted by intellect and disposition to found the Christian Church, which He intended to establish through their administration?

What did the apostles do after the descent of the Holy Ghost?

Their greatest desire was to preach the gospel to the Jews and the Samaritans, and subsequently to the Gentiles, in order to make them know Jesus and all the mysteries He had worked, and to reconcile them to His offended Father. In fact, the Holy Ghost was given to the apostles chiefly to make them ambassadors of Jesus Christ, and to teach mankind that they must believe in the man-God, Christ crucified, if they wished to be saved; and that they must embrace His doctrines and conform to His life, if they aspired to that eternal happiness which God promised through His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the doctrine they preached with so much zeal and energy, despite the terrible punishments and shameful deaths confronting them; and they gloried to suffer and profess their faith in Christ, whom they had never rightly known till they had received the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

What effects did the Holy Ghost produce in the souls of those who received Him?

He produced the most admirable effects in them; and one of the grandest was to make Jesus truly known to them, to unite Him to them, to apply the graces of those mysteries to their souls, to make

them love His doctrines, to give them grace and strength to practise and confess it, and never to be ashamed of Christ and His gospel.

2nd. He imprints and engraves the law of God on our souls, and He gives us a love of it, because He said: "I will give you a new heart—I will take away your stony heart, and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit into you, and you shall walk in my precepts, you will observe my commandments, and you will conform your life to them."[1]

3rd. This spirit of adoption makes us children of God, detaches us from the pleasures of the senses, and makes us lead a spiritual life entirely opposed to the world and the flesh.

4th. When we receive this spirit and when it dwells in us, it becomes the soul of our soul, leads it on, makes it work, and stamps on it the sentiments and the dispositions of Jesus; because He communicates His spirit to all His members.

5th. The Holy Ghost is charity; and when charity is diffused over the soul, it dwells in it and unites that soul to God and to the neighbour, in such a manner that all Christians will have but one heart, and one soul, and one being, composed of many members, all united in the same spirit, with Jesus as their chief.

Finally, the Holy Ghost is a devouring fire, a fountain of living water springing from eternal life, detaching the soul from all worldly things, and making her sigh and groan here on earth in expectation of the effects of that divine adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

EJACULATION TO JESUS IN THE MYSTERIES OF HIS ASCENSION AND THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

O Jesus, my Saviour and my God, you are now exalted up to heaven, after you achieved the great work your Father gave you to do; you are now in possession of that glory due to your humanity, you have come into the place of your repose, and you have accomplished this sacred mystery not only for yourself, but for us likewise. Your charity will not allow you to separate from us; you ascended into heaven to prepare a place there for us, to be our advocate and mediator between God and us, and to completely finish all you have done in this world by the grandeur of your miracles, the sanctity of your life, the knowledge of your doctrine, and the depth of your mysteries. It was necessary, also, that you should fill the heavens with your glory, in order to fill our Church and our

[1] Ezechiel, xxxiv. 26.

hearts with the plenitude of the Holy Ghost, whom your Father and you had sent, after you had finished your mission here on earth. I adore you in the bosom of your Father, where you rejoiced in that glory which you possessed from eternity.

O my divine Jesus, may you be for ever great and exalted at the right hand of your Father, where He has placed you above the principalities, and powers, and virtues, and dominations, and above all the glories of heaven combined in one. He has placed all things under your feet, and He has given you, as their chief, to the churches militant and triumphant. Continue, O my adorable Redeemer, to look down upon us from the height of your glory. Pour down upon us, thou divine Sun of Justice, the influence of your light, your love, and your grace. O sovereign high-priest, always present before your Father, cease not to plead for me, to offer and present me to Him, because your know my wants and weaknesses better than I can.

All my past and present miseries can never cast me down when I remember that I have in you that glorious Pontiff who ascended into heaven, and who can compassionate my helplessness. It is this belief that emboldens me to present myself with confidence before the throne of grace, to receive there mercy, strength, and pardon. May all the thoughts of my heart and all the desires of my soul turn to you, now enthroned in heaven, that this earth may never again appear pleasing to me, and that I who ought to be with you may live on it as a citizen of heaven only.

Grant, O my divine Mediator and most powerful Advocate before God, that I may receive all the fruits of your ascension; that this mystery may always keep my heart turned to you; that it may create within me a detachment from all in this world, a yearning and ardent desire for heaven, tears in this my exile, weariness in this my pilgrimage, contempt for the goods and pleasures of this world, and a great love of penance and mortification, in order that I may be perfected hereafter in heaven with you, who promised to send the Holy Ghost as soon as you arrived at your mansion of glory.

Do not leave us orphans, dear Jesus; send us the Comforter, the spirit of truth, to enlighten our souls and fill our hearts with His divine charity. Give us His zeal and His strength, in order that we may be able to confess your holy name and gospel against all the attacks of the world and our passions. Come, O Holy Spirit, great gift of the Father and the Son, come and finish the grand work of our sanctification. Make us so thoroughly spiritual that we will live no longer according to the flesh, nor according to the desires of this

world. Destroy in us those carnal works of which St. Paul speaks, and fix in their stead the love of your law and your precepts, that we may serve God not in the spirit of fear, but of love, which alone can make us true children of God. Unite us to the most holy Trinity. Banish all kinds of dissension and division from the Church and from her children, so that all may be animated by the same spirit, and have only one heart and one soul, that we all may render to God a spiritual worship, and that we all may serve Him in spirit and in truth, as He wishes to be adored and served. Grant, O divine Spirit, that I may follow in my conduct those inspirations only which you suggest to me; that I may form no designs, nor speak, nor act but for you and according to your lights, so that having lived according to you I can offer up and consummate my sacrifice for you at the hour of my death. Amen.

SECOND PART.

JESUS CONSIDERED IN HIS DIFFERENT CONNECTIONS WITH GOD HIS FATHER, WITH CREATURES IN GENERAL, WITH MEN IN PARTICULAR, AND ALSO WITH THE BLESSED IN HEAVEN.

FIRST INSTRUCTION.

ON JESUS CONSIDERED IN HIS CONNECTION WITH GOD HIS FATHER.

CHAPTER I.

ON JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD.

WHAT ought we to consider in Jesus Christ as the Son of God?

We ought to consider three things—1st. How He is the Son of God. 2nd. What the Father did with regard to His Son. 3rd. What the Son did with regard to His Father.

In what way is Jesus the Son of God?

Many heretics taught that Jesus was the adopted Son only of the Father; but He is infinitely more than that, for He is the natural Son of God, and has the same nature and the same substance as His Father. The Father in His knowledge of Himself produced the Son, and this production is called generation; but no creature can understand this generation or speak of it in a comprehensible manner. Who can conceive that this Son has a Father, because He, the Son, like the Father, is from eternity; and yet faith obliges us to believe that He as God is co-eternal with the Father; and hence, as one is the eternal Father the other is the eternal Son. The Old and the New Testaments, the prophets, the angels, the apostles, and the eternal Father Himself, supply us with very many proofs of this fundamental doctrine. Holy David, speaking in the person of the eternal Father, addresses Jesus in the following language: "You are my Son, I have begotten thee to-day." St. Paul says that the words were never spoken to any of the other angels which Gabriel addressed to the Virgin Mary, namely: "That she was to bring forth a Son, and that He should be called the Son of the Most High." And the eternal Father endorsed this language at the waters

of the River Jordan and upon Mount Thabor, when He said that the Son of Mary was "His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased."[1] The apostles openly proclaimed that Christ was the Son of God, and St. Matthew says that the "centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus, having seen the earth quake and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: 'Indeed, this was the Son of God.'"[2] Christ Himself took this sacred name even in the presence of His judges; for when He was accused of blasphemy on that account, and consequently condemned to death, He did not retract or deny that He was the Son of God. The Arians and the Socinians regarded Christ as a great prophet or the adopted Son of God only, and added that He possessed more grace than others; but we believe, with St. Paul and our infallible Church, that He is the real and natural Son of God, and on this faith and immovable basis our faith and Church are founded.

Was it not in the bosom of His eternal Father that the generation of Christ took place?

Oh, let us raise up our hearts and souls to our God, and see how wonderful He is in the generation of His Son.

1st. The eternal Father begat Him from all eternity in His bosom, from which bosom He was never separated; He was always with and in His Father, and when the Father said that He was His Son whom He had begotten *to-day*, He intended to convey that His Son was with Him then and from eternity, and not from any fixed time.

2nd. The Son was and will be eternally in the bosom of His Father; He was begotten, according to His humanity, in the womb of the most holy Mary, and He was born of her in the plenitude of time appointed by the divine wisdom of God; and hence He had no other father than that eternal One, who sent Him into the womb of His Mother Mary, to be there united to our nature.

3rd. The Father produced His Son in the bosom of our Church and upon our holy altars, and He did so without causing any separation between them; and it is there the Father regards Him as the object of His affection, because He gives Him to us there to live with us and to teach us to live according to His life.

4th. The resurrection of Christ was another kind of generation, because St. Paul applies the language of holy David to it: "You are my Son, I have begotten you to-day."[3] And this demonstrates that it was the Father, as the first of the Trinity, that resurrected Him,

[1] Matt. xvii. 5. [2] Matt. xxvii. 54. [3] Heb. i. 4.

and in doing so gave Him a new birth by making Him come forth from the tomb clothed with immortality and glory; and hence as He came forth from the womb of His most holy Mother to die, so He came forth from the womb of the tomb to die no more.

5th. The eternal Father begets and, in a certain sense, causes His Son to be born in the souls of the just, when He causes Him to dwell in them by faith, by grace, by the presence of the Holy Ghost and that of His adorable body, which we receive in the holy Eucharist. Christ Himself says that it is the love of God which causes Him to dwell in us, because he says: "If any man loves me, he will observe my word, and my Father will love him, and will come to him, and we will take up our dwelling with him."[1] Oh, blessed words, which prove to us that not only the Son, but the entire Trinity dwells within us through the presence of sanctifying grace. Oh, how grand is this grace through which the Father gives us His Son, and even begets Him in us.

What does the eternal Father do with regard to His Son?

1st. He loves Him with the same love with which He loves Himself, that is, with a necessary and essential love, and He manifested His love for His Son when He placed all things in His hands; and hence St. John says that "the Father loves His Son, and has placed all things in His hands."[2] The Father has communicated His own substance, His divinity, and His essence to His Son. He has made Him sovereign over all visible and invisible things, and over the present and the future world, and, in addition, He has made Him dispenser of all His gifts and graces. 2nd. The Father's love for His Son is evident from the fact that He gave Him a full knowledge of all His designs, and empowered Him to accomplish every one of them, even with His humanity and divinity united. 3rd. The Father so completely loves His Son, that He loves nothing in the order of nature or grace but in Him and in connection with Him, and hence all things are made by the Son.

What did the Son do for the Father?

1st. He did His will in everything, and the Son Himself says: "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me."[3] The Son has placed all His glory in fulfilling this adorable and always wise will; and hence He has given a complete worship to His Father, and consequently all the submission due to Him.

2nd. Jesus does only what He has seen His Father do, because

[1] John, xiv. 23. [2] John, iii. 35. [3] John, iii. 35.

He never acted, nor will He, but by the power and will emanating from His Father, from whom He received from eternity all He is and all He has. And yet mystery worthy of our profoundest admiration, what the Father does the Son does, because the Son is united to the Father in principle, in will, and in operation. Let us strive, like true children of God, to imitate this adorable union, and never to act by ourselves, but to depend on God and on Christ as the principle and model of our actions.

3rd. All that Jesus did during His life for His Father was to give Him glory by His sufferings and His actions, and to make Him known to all men. Oh, happy life of the man-God, which was always employed glorifying God and doing His work. Jesus not only glorified His Father on earth, but He is glorifying Him now in heaven with His adorable humanity and His elect, and He will continue so doing through the endless ages of eternity.

If Jesus be the only Son of God, why are we Christians called His children?

Christians are truly called the children of God, but they are so in a far different way from Jesus; because He is the Son of God by nature, and because He is the same substance as His Father, but we are children of God by grace and adoption only. The Father adopts us as His children in Jesus Christ, His only Son, and He associates us to His divine affiliation by making us participators in His spirit; and in this admirable way we become brothers of Jesus, and make only one Son of God with Him, and this is why St. Paul says to the Galatians "that God had sent His Son into the world in order that we would receive the adoption of the children of God."[1]

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE ONLY SON OF THE ETERNAL FATHER.

O Jesus, natural but not adopted Son of the living God, God of God, the only object of your Father's affection, I adore you in your eternal generation, so absolutely incomprehensible to the human intellect. My Jesus, you are the only production of the divine mind, and, though produced, you existed from eternity in the bosom of your Father, because you were begotten of Him from eternity. Though He sent you into this world, He was never without you, nor you without Him from eternity; you desired to be amongst us, and yet you never ceased to be with your Father; you were born of your

[1] Gal. iv. 4, 5.

Father from eternity, and you desired to be born in time of the Blessed Virgin.

Oh, how marvellous are those mysteries, and so highly above my senses and my comprehension; but I am happy to believe them without understanding or daring to reason upon them. I adore them without any explanation, and I love them because faith tells me to do so. O my divine Saviour, I adore you in the temporal birth which you took, at your Incarnation, in the chaste womb of Mary, where you continued the Son of God after you became the Son of the most holy Virgin.

I adore you also in that birth you have taken in the Church and in the souls of the just, where your Father continually begets you. How worthy you are of admiration, love, and respect, in those three different states in which faith makes you known to us as the Son of the eternal Father. You always suffered and acted for your Father, you never concealed His glory, and what you received from Him you offered up to Him, always saying: "My Father, all that I have is yours"[1]—my substance, my being, my power, and all that I possess. I offer up and give them back to you, the source from whence I received them all. O my divine Saviour, you have associated me by an effect of your love in your divine affiliation, and hence made me your brother. Grant that like you I may seek only the glory of my heavenly Father, that all my labours may be to do always what will be pleasing to His eyes, that like you I may never say anything but for my Father, that I may never do anything but for Him, and that I may never cease giving back to my God the life and the existence I received from Him. As your Father loves nothing but what is in you and in connection with you, grant that I may act as the only Son of God with you, that I may be animated with your spirit and live comformable to your life.

Grant that I may live only for you, and that my spirit and will may always be obedient to you; grant that my body may glorify you by a never-ceasing sacrifice, that all my actions may have no other beginning and no other end than in you, that I may use all the goods you have given me for your glory alone, and according as you may desire, so that at death I can say with you: "My Father, I have glorified you upon earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do,"[2] and now I come to you, my God and my Father, to possess the inheritance you promised to your children. Amen.

[1] John, xvii. 10. [2] John, xvii. 4.

CHAPTER II.

ON JESUS, THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD, AND THE FIGURE OF HIS SUBSTANCE.

WHY do we say that Christ is the image of the invisible God and the figure of His substance?

Because St. Paul teaches that Jesus is the perfect image of His Father; that He is His living and substantial resemblance, and not a superficial or figurative one; that He and His Father possess the same nature, and are really the same; and that the attributes and the works of His Father belong equally to Him. God is invisible, because He is a spirit, and, like all supernatural beings, is invisible to coporal eyes. Our eyes can only see corporal objects—things which have figure and colour; and as God has nothing like to bodies, He has never been seen, and never will, because He dwells in light inaccessible to corporal eyes. He is not only invisible to corporal eyes, but He is incomprehensible to human understanding. No creature, not even the angels, can comprehend Him, because a finite being cannot comprehend an infinite Being. God alone can comprehend himself. He manifested a part of His glory in the creation of this world, and in the marvellous prodigies He performed in favour of His people; but all these could never represent God to us in any way approaching to perfection. We could well say that He always dwelt in His light inaccessible, only that He manifested Himself in and through His Son. It was only in His Son Jesus that He wished to represent Himself, and this Son perfectly represented His Father, because He is His image, and like Him in all things.

Do not creatures, as well as Jesus, represent this invisible God?

When He extracted this vast universe from nothing, and formed all creatures, He stamped upon them some lineaments of His divinity. All creatures, says the prophet, proclaim the glory of the Lord; the heavens publish, and the earth is full of His mercy and power; His majesty, His sovereignty, and His wisdom are manifested in creation, and in the government and preservation of the universe. The nine choirs of angels publish His divine attributes; the seraphim His love, the cherubim His knowlege and His light, the thrones His immutability, the dominations His sovereignty over all creatures, the principalities declare that He is the principle from whom all things originate, the powers proclaim His omnipotence, the virtues His strength, the archangels the care He has of

all things, the angels His paternal providence over mankind, and all represent His sanctity and His holiness to us. Man, the masterpiece of all His works, is made to the real image and likeness of this invisible God; but he is a most imperfect likeness, because God has communicated Himself to him only in part. Jesus alone is the "figure of His substance and the splendour of His eternal light,"[1] the stainless mirror of His majesty, the image of His goodness, and the perfect likeness of His invisible being. He is the veritable image, because He is the truth; He is the speaking image, because He is the Word; He is the living image, because He is the life. He is not the empty image, because He is the power and the plenitude of all things.

Is Jesus the perfect image of His Father, and how does He represent Him?

Jesus perfectly represents His Father—1st. In His nature. 2nd. In His attributes. 3rd. In His works. He is the same nature and substance as His Father, and hence He is God as well as His Father; and St. Paul proves this in his epistle to the Philippians when he says that "Christ being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."[2] The prophets and the apostles called Him the great God, blessed in all ages, provoked by the Israelites in the desert, adored by the angels, before whom every knee doth bend, so that whoever sees and knows Him, sees and knows His Father, and He Himself said so to St. Philip.[3]

2nd. It is necessary that He should have the same divine attributes as His Father, because He is the same God. He knows all things as well as the Father—nothing is hidden from Him, for as St. Paul says, "all things are open to His eyes."[4] "All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him."[5] Like the Father, He is omnipotent, because He says: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth."[6] Like the Father, He is eternal, because "He is yesterday, to-day, and for eternity."[7] "In the beginning," says St. John, "was the Word, and by Him was made all things that were made."[8] Like His Father, He is immense, because He was in heaven whilst speaking to Nicodemus here on earth. His humanity dwells in heaven, and in the adorable Eucharist here on earth, and His divinity dwells entirely in those places and in every other place as well. He is holy like His Father, and is the principle of it in all His creatures; and so on of all the other divine attributes.

[1] Heb. i 3. [2] Phil. ii. 6. [3] John xiv. 9. [4] Heb. iv. 13.
[5] Coloss ii. 3. [6] Matt. xxviii. 18. [7] Heb. xiii. 8. [8] John, i. 1 & 3.

3rd. Jesus represents in the most admirable manner the works of His Father, because, says St. John, "all that the Father did, the Son did also."[1] The Father created the universe, and the Son fixed from the beginning the foundations of the world, and everything that was made, was made by Him. The Father preserves the world, and the Son sustains all things with the power of His word.[2] The Father justifies and saves the world, and the Son is called the Saviour of man, and is his justice and sanctification likewise.

Why has Jesus appeared on this earth as the image of the invisible God?

He has done so to repair the image of the Deity, engraved by Himself upon our souls, and which sin had disfigured; and He repaired it by uniting Himself to us in His mysteries, in His graces, and in His sacraments, and hence as He is the image of His Father, so should we be His image. But, alas, how numerous are those pusillanimous Christians who do not struggle to retain this image, and who rarely think of recovering the perfection to which they are called. This is the perfection mentioned by St. Paul when he says: "It is necessary to be conformable to the image of the Son of God."[3] How are we to bear the image of Jesus upon us? As the divinity and the humanity of Jesus are united in a single personality, so too we ought to carry the image of the divinity united to our souls, and this is the reason we became at our baptism, participators of the divine nature.

But how can we impress the image of the divinity upon ourselves?

We can by imitating God, and St. Paul proves this when he says: "Be you imitators of God as being His well-beloved children;"[4] and St. Leo, preaching to his people, says: "My dear brethren, if we go back to the origin of our existence, and strive to comprehend what took place at our creation, we would see that man was created to the image and likeness of God, in order that we would imitate Him." But in what way will we imitate God, and become like unto Him? We cannot imitate Him in His divine nature, but we can in His attributes.

1st. We can imitate Him in His light by judging all things as He judges them, by the standard of His divine light. And, oh, if we acted in this way, how contemptible the world would appear to us, how detestable sin, and how grand and good our God.

2nd. We can imitate His love by loving only the things He loves, and in the same way He loves them.

[1] John, v. 19. [2] Heb. i. 10. [3] Ephes. v. 1. [4] Ephes. v. 1.

3rd. We can become independent like Him by never allowing creatures to rule us, or to make us their slaves, and when we use them only as a means to unite us to God.

4th. Like Him, we can be happy when we place all our happiness and comfort in the love and knowledge of Him alone.

5th. Like Him, we can become, in a certain sense, omnipotent, when with the power of faith and grace we subject our passions, and triumph over the world, the devil, and their false charms and suggestions.

6th. Like Him, we can become, in a certain sense, immutable, when we desire only what He desires, when we become so firm and constant in His service, that nothing would be able to separate us from His love, and when we can behold, unmoved by trouble or dejection, all the vanities, instabilities, and vicissitudes of human things.

7th. We can participate in His immensity when we possess the love of God and our neighbour. Our soul possesses in her desires a species of immensity, and in this immensity of her spirit she is capable of almost boundless knowledge; and hence when we love God, we are everywhere with Him in His immensity, because the soul mounts up to heaven to dwell and praise God there with His angels. The love of the neighbour unites us to mankind in Christian fellowship, and consequently obliges us to sympathise in the sufferings of our fellow-man and to pray for him.

8th. We can be simple like Him, when we seek Him above, when we become simple in our words, in our desires, in our intentions, and when we conduct ourselves in every way free from hypocrisy and dissimulation.

9th. We can become just like Him when we regard sin with a sovereign contempt, when we punish it in ourselves, and when we give to all what we owe them.

10th. We can be good like Him when we wish to be good, and to perform the good as well as we can, not only to our parents and friends, but to strangers, our enemies, and to the whole world, just as God does, who makes His sun to shine on the bad as well as the good, and His rain to fall upon the fields of the wicked as well as upon those of the just.

11th. We can become merciful like Him when we pardon our enemies from our hearts, when we compassionate the temporal and spiritual miseries of our neighbour, and when we do all we can to succour and relieve his wants.

12th. We can become holy like Him by purifying ourselves from our sins, by combating our defects, and by practising, as far as we are able, all the virtues in their perfection. This is the way to repair the image of the Deity which we have almost defaced in our souls by our crimes. By contemplating the glory of the Lord we will be transformed into His image, and by the illumination of the Holy Ghost we will advance from one heavenly light to another, and, as St. Augustine says, "if we love God we shall surely become like to Him, just as persons become like those they love; and hence if we love this earth, we shall become earthy, like it; and if we love God, we shall become, in a very significant way, like to Him."

It will not suffice to bear upon us the image of the Deity, but we must also carry the image of Christ made man, and we must likewise be conformable to His image.

When the Son of God became man, He did so to accommodate Himself to us, in order that we could be able to accommodate ourselves and be conformable to Him, for all those whom God had known by His eternal prescience, He predestined to be conformable to the image of His Son; and as all Christians are bound to be conformable to this image, all ought to imitate His virtues, and to manifest in their conduct the sanctity of His life; and they can do this by casting off the old man, by destroying the sway of their passions, the love of sensual pleasures, avarice, pride, envy, anger, and ambition, all of which are attributes of the old man of sin, and entirely opposed to Jesus and His maxims. We cannot be invested with the new man of grace till we have cut off the old man of sin; we cannot carry the image of the heavenly man till we have effaced all traces of the earthly man's image, and hence we must necessarily eradicate from our souls all criminal ideas, all corrupt inclinations, and substitute for them the feelings and the sentiments of Jesus.

Are there any examples calculated to make us understand how to engrave the Holy Name on our hearts?

The saints tell us that we ought to do just as painters do when drawing a likeness of anyone. They always keep the object they wish to paint engraved on their minds and ever before their eyes, so as to place upon their canvas the exact lineaments which they see in the original; or, better still, we ought to imitate the sculptor, who keeps chiselling and retrenching the stone till he reaches that point which exactly resembles the original which he intends to represent. In the same way we should never lose sight of Jesus, we should keep Him always present to our minds, and shape as well as we can all

our actions, all our desires and inclinations, in order to make them so many lineaments representing those of Jesus, and, furthermore, we ought to retrench and cut away from our hearts everything defective, until we arrive at that point where no defect will be visible, and where we shall see ourselves representing as near as we can the life and dispositions of Jesus.

But, alas! how very far are we yet from the possession of this image of the heavenly man; how many things have we not still to retrench in our interior as well as in our exterior; how many virtues yet to acquire in order to be conformable to Jesus.

But to our shame it must be said that the most part of Christians carry only the image of the infernal one, the devil. The image of this beast is atheism, impiety, heresy, impurities, blasphemies, immodesties, and all that tissue of crime which scandalizes and corrupts the people. We carry upon us the badges of scandal, and we do not blush; and we make a boast and public profession of sin as often as we openly commit the crimes we renounced at baptism. We will see what image the lives of the most part of Christians represent if we take the image of Jesus in one hand and that of Babylon in the other—that horrible image which St. John paints vested in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, pearls, and precious stones, holding in her hand a golden vase full of the abominations of her iniquities, and having the name *Mystery* and *Babylon the Great* written upon her forehead. If we carry those two images into those assemblies where ostentation, slander, base language, vanity, and impurity reign, which of the two images do such assemblies resemble? Do they resemble Jesus, poor, humble, and suffering, or this impure, proud, vain, and ambitious spirit? You see it, my God, you suffer it, and you will surely judge it.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD.

O Jesus, my Saviour, I adore you, the substantial image of your Father, the figure of His substance, and the splendour of His glory. You express Him, not in figure, but really and truly in all you are and all you did. Grant that I may be, by grace and imitation, what you are by nature; that I may manifest in my conduct all the attributes of God; that I may imitate His wisdom by doing everything according to the exact weight and measure; that I may imitate His mercy by granting pardon from my heart to all my enemies; that I may imitate His justice by giving every one his own; that I may

imitate His sanctity by labouring with all my powers to acquire perfection; and, finally, that my life may be all divine, a life only for God, and according to His spirit. What use, O my divine Jesus, will it be to me to carry the image and likeness of thy Divinity engraved upon my soul if I do not carry your image also?

What good will it be to me to have an existence which exalts and distinguishes me from the beasts of the forest, if I am not invested with your deserts, and if your image be not formed in me? To effect all this you came upon this earth, you became man, and united your personality to our nature; you accommodated yourself to our weakness when you joined yourself to us, as the prophet Elias did to the body of the dead child, to give us life and to impress your image upon us; and this is the reason why you continue giving yourself to us in the holy Eucharist, in order to complete your image and likeness in us.

Efface, O my divine Saviour, all the marks of the old man of sin from my soul, so that all may see in me the image of the Heavenly Man only, and that I may manifest your life, your virtues, and your sentiments only in my whole conduct. Alas! dear Lord, how full of confusion I am when I look into myself and consider how disfigured I am and how distant from you. I cannot discover in myself any traces of your poverty, your humility, your cross, your patience, your graces, and the virtues flowing from your mysteries, because sin has effaced almost all I possessed, and the devil substituted for them the image of his pride, and the world its love of pleasures, its vanities, and vain amusements.

I find no difficulty in discovering the image of the worldly man in me. I see him in the vain desires of my soul and in the folly of my thoughts. I see him filling my heart with earthly feelings and evil inclinations. My eyes are blinded from curiosities, my tongue is employed in foolish and uncharitable conversations, and my hands in actions by no means conformable to your sanctity. I feel the working of this earthly man in my interior and in all my exterior actions, and hence I do not see that I resemble you in anything.

When, O Lord, will you annihilate and for ever destroy the old man of sin in me, so opposed to your holy maxims, and when will you be truly created in me? Finish, my dear Jesus, finish the good work which your grace enabled me to begin. Come, O image of the invisible God, come and reform all my interior, and when I am perfectly renovated your heavenly Father may behold your image only in me, so that I may make one image with you for all eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER III.

ON JESUS AS THE WORD OF THE ETERNAL FATHER.

What else is Jesus in connection with His Father?

He is the Word and the living expression of His Father's thoughts and of the knowledge which He always speaks in Himself, because He always knows Himself, and as St. John says: "In the begnining was the Word, and the Word was with God."[1]

Does not the eternal Father speak the word externally as well as internally?

1st. He has spoken it externally when all things were made by the Word, for, says holy David, "He spoke, and all things were made."[2] 2nd. He spoke the Word to the angels when He placed Him above them and commanded them to adore Him, and hence St. Paul says: "When He bringeth His first-begotten into the world He said: let all the angels of God adore Him."[3] And not only do the angels adore Him, but, as the Church sings in the preface of the Mass, it is through Him that they praise and adore God.

3rd. He has spoken this Word to man when He sent His divine Son into this world, when this Word became flesh and spoke to us on the part of God, His Father, and made known things hidden up to that time, and He also spoke this Word on Mount Thabor, when He commanded us to hear Him.

4th. Before this Word became flesh God spoke of it to Adam, to Abraham, to Moses, to all the patriarchs, and to all the just; but the Word was then enveloped, as it were, in shadows, figures, and a species of cipher which faith alone was able to read and comprehend. In this way also we should read and regard the Old Law, the key of which is faith in the New Law, for we must always suppose that Jesus is the end of the law, and that it regards Him as its centre, its beginning, its end, and the object to which it conducts mankind.

5th. God speaks to us in the New Law only through His Son, Jesus; this law is the great commandment and the Word abridged. Formerly God spoke through the prophets, for all predicted the coming of the Just One. God spoke also in many different ways, but in those latter days He spoke through His Son, and holy David says: "God hath spoken once, those two things have I heard, that power belongeth to God, and mercy to thee O Lord."[4] God speaking to us of His Son makes us understand both His justice and

[1] John, i. 1. [2] Psalms, cxlviii. 6. [3] Heb. i. 6. [4] Psalms, lxi. 12.

His mercy. He makes us understand His justice as it could only be satisfied by the death of His Son, God and man; and He makes us understand His mercy when we find in Jesus the remission of our sins and the remedy for all our misfortunes.

How should we act regarding this eternal word?

1st. We should hear with attention and respect this eternal Word of the Father, speaking to us in so many different ways. 1st. It speaks to us by itself, because it is the supreme reason and the light of all the created spirits it enlightens. 2nd. It speaks to us through the Old and the New Law. And 3rd. It speaks to us through His life and all His mysteries. This life, which is, according to St. Augustine, the light of mankind, has descended upon this earth and appeals to us through His preaching, His acts, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, and, in fact, through His whole demeanour, to separate ourselves from the world and to come to Him who alone can make us happy. 4th. The Word speaks to us through the afflictions, the consolations, the virtues, and the defects of others, and even through all the occurrences of this world. It speaks to us through all creatures, for they all say something to us of the grandeur and mercy of God; and hence Solomon says that "Wisdom preacheth abroad, she uttereth her voice in the streets, saying, O children, how long will you love childishness, and fools covet those things which are hurtful to themselves?"[1] Such is the teaching of eternal wisdom, and happy those who hear and practise those lessons.

2nd. It will not suffice to hear this divine Word, but we must know it well, because in it, as in an abridged book, are contained all the treasures of the Church and all the science of God. He who knows this Word knows all religion, because he knows the chief, the members, and all that concerns faith and morals.

3rd. We should learn from this divine Word to accustom ourselves to pronounce it with becoming piety and to use it often in our conversations. "We," says St. Paul, "speak before God and in Jesus Christ."[2] And well he could say so, for the name of Jesus was always on his lips, and all his discourses, which carried so much unction, so much peace and joy into the hearts of those who heard him, were always sweetened with this most holy name. Ah! if we were well replenished with the knowledge and the love of this Word, we would never find it difficult to speak it, and we would

[1] Prov. i. 20, 22. [2] 2 Cor. ii. 17.

be able to draw from our hearts, as from a treasury, the truths which Jesus placed in them.

What are we to do in order to understand this eternal Word which God has spoken to us, and who still speaks to us in so many different ways?

If we wish to hear this Word as it ought to be heard, we must control all the demands of our passions, we must estrange ourselves from the din and confusion of this world, and we must fly from those who love this world, for it is only by entering into ourselves and by interior recollection that we can hear the voice of the Word. When He wants to speak to our hearts He wishes to have them entirely to Himself, because he wishes to speak words of eternal life to them, and to say to them that He is their Saviour. O my good Lord, give me hearing to understand you, and then speak to my heart.

EJACULATION TO JESUS AS THE WORD OF THE ETERNAL FATHER.

O Word of God by which all things were made, eternal and immutable, living expression of the thoughts and knowledge of your Father, I adore you in His bosom and in the Sacred Scriptures, which speak to us about you in a figurative and prophetic manner, or in a clear or unveiled sense. Give understanding to my heart, and say to it that you are He, and then all the language by which men could hold me back would be powerless to satisfy me, for you are the living, the efficacious Word which infuses spirit and life into the hearts of those to whom you make yourself known.

The impious speak to us in fables, and worldlings of their visions and dreams; and you, omnipotent Lord God, speak to us of your Son, and speaking through His lips you speak the truth. Great God, eternal Father of Jesus, you in whom this Word is from eternity, grant, through your great mercy, that I may never cease to hear this divine Word which you speak in all places; quell the tumults and rebellions of my passions, and control the assaults of this world against my heart and soul, that I may not lose a single tittle of what this divine Word speaks to me.

I have listened too long to the words of error and falsehood, and now it is time that my soul, so often seduced by the language of the world, should undeceive herself and seek in this eternal Word the truth which alone can teach her. Speak to me, O Lord Jesus, and speak to me of yourself only. Speak of your grandeur, your mercies,

your mysteries, and your virtues, that I may know and understand this Word made flesh only. O small abbreviated Word, which embraces all the religion spoken in so many and different forms by the patriarchs and the prophets, and announced to so many nations with such zeal and courage by the apostles.

O hallowed Word, which contains all truth and knowledge, how many books are necessary to explain what you are and to expound all thy mysteries; and yet how little you are known. All creation speaks to us of this Word only, it manifests itself in the heavens, on the earth, and even in the deepest depths of the sea, and of the land; and yet very often I do not hear it. Ah! my Saviour, open my heart and soul to those countless voices speaking of you; fill me with this Word that I may be always speaking of it, not only to the poor, but to the great, to the saint and to the sinner, to the rich and to the lowly, so that all may discover in this inexhaustible treasury of wisdom, science, sanctity, grace, truth, and divinity, everything necessary to instruct and sustain them in their vocation. When will the happy time come when I shall hear, after arriving at the heavenly Jerusalem, this Word only which God speaks to His angels, and which will form the conversation and the eternal praises of the blessed for ever. Amen.

SECOND INSTRUCTION.

ON JESUS CONSIDERED IN HIS QUALITIES OR CONNECTION WITH CREATURES AND WITH THIS VISIBLE AND TERRESTRIAL WORLD.

What connection has Jesus with creatures?

His connection with them, says St. Paul, is in many and wonderful ways. 1st. He is the first-born amongst them. 2nd. All things have been created by Him. 3rd. All creatures subsist in and through Him. 4th. All have been made by Him. 5th. He is the inheritor of them all.

CHAPTER I.

ON JESUS CHRIST, THE FIRST-BORN BEFORE ALL CREATURES.

What does St. Paul mean when he says that Christ is the first-born before all creatures?

1st. He means that Christ as the Son of God and the Word, was before all creatures, not that He was the first-born creature in this visible world, as the Arians hold; but that He was God, co-eternal with His Father, and that hence He was never created. All things were created by Him, because He is the principle of their existence, and in this sense He is the first-born of creatures, and hence there was no time when Jesus commenced to be. He was in His Father as long as the Father is God, and as the Father began to know Himself from eternity, and as His Son is His knowledge, it follows that His Son must be from eternity. Solomon says: "The Lord posssesed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning;"[1] and therefore He was as eternal and as much God as His Father, and hence of the same substance and eternally born from Him.

2nd. Jesus is the first object the Father loved in time and eternity, the first object in whom He saw all His future designs and the grand work of man's redemption and salvation, which He was to accomplish.

3rd. Jesus is the first in every way, because He occupies the first rank as the Son of God, and from the plenitude of grace

[1] Prov. viii. 22.

residing in Him as their fountain, and because all things in the order of nature and grace originated from Him as from their principal.

4th. Jesus is the first in the order of nature, because He is the Sovereign Master of all creatures, and hence can dispose of them just as he pleases. He is first in the Church, because He is her chief and her founder. He is the first-born amongst the dead, because He is the first of those who arose glorious and immortal, the first-born amongst many brothers, and the first in glory, because He holds the first place in heaven. The saints rejoice in heavenly glory through Him, because they place their crowns at the feet of Him who is the beginning and the end of His Father's contemplations; and hence we can well say that Christ the man-God is the first in God's designs.

There are many eminent Catholic doctors of divinity who hold that God, when creating this world from nothing, had His Son Jesus principally in view, and that that Son was designed to become man even before man had sinned; because those doctors say this visible world, and all the creatures composing it, are too limited and imperfect to give by themselves the glory and honour to God which He demands for His work, but that He found in His Son a worship proportioned to the dignity of His being. Whatever weight there may be in this opinion, it is certain that God saw the fall of Adam from eternity, and saw from the same eternity the Redeemer of man; and although the Son of God was not to come if Adam had not sinned, still the common opinion of the holy fathers is that after the fall of man God loved creatures only in Jesus Christ.

What reflection should we make on the truth that Jesus holds the first rank everywhere?

As He is first everywhere He ought to be the same in our hearts, in our souls, and in all our affections, and He ought to be the first object of our devotions, and the beginning of all our actions as well. The world should not hold the first place in a soul which God alone should occupy, which Jesus purchased and sanctified by His blood, and of which He is the beginning; and therefore what a terrible injustice it must be when we give the first place in our hearts to others than to Jesus Christ.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE FIRST-BORN BEFORE ALL CREATURES.

O my Saviour Jesus Christ, I adore you as the first-born before all creatures, begotten from eternity in the bosom of your Father, first and only Son begotten of His substance, nothing existed before you, for you preceded all that was created; you are the first in His bosom, the first in all His intentions, the first in His Church, in heaven and in your prerogative of Son of the Most High, first in the plenitude of the divinity substantially dwelling in you, first by the fulness of grace of which you are the source, first by the plenitude of truth which you communicate to us without losing any yourself, first by the plenitude of your sanctity of which you make all your children and all your members real participators, and finally by the plenitude of your glory which flows from you over all the elect; and hence you should hold the first place in my heart. Ah, my Lord Jesus, I beseech you to be always the principle of my actions, my thoughts, my desires, my intentions, and my conversations, so that all may be from you, and in you, and through you, and in order that you may be my first and my last, my beginning and my end, and that you alone may live and reign in me through time and eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER II.

ON JESUS, THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS.

Why do we say that Jesus is the creator of this visible and terrestrial world, and of all they contain?

Both St. John[1] and St. Paul[2] say that all things have been made by the Word, and nothing that was made was made without Him, except, as St. Augustine says, sin, which is the production of the perverse will of the fallen angels and our first parents. All that is in heaven and on earth, all things visible and invisible, all animate and inanimate things, angels and men, all have been made by Him, because He is the Word of God, the author, the principle, the model, and the wisdom of them, and all bear the impress of their creator, and proclaim the wisdom and the grandeur of the omnipotent architect who made them. In truth, there is no spectacle so beautiful as this grand universe above and about us, with the different and countless creatures composing it; and yet all the beauties which we admire in the heavens and on the earth exclaim how grand is the God who created and formed us. What so beautiful and magnificent as the

[1] John, i. 3. [2] Coloss. i. 13.

firmament under which we dwell, and which He has spread as a pavilion over our heads. He created the sun to preside over the day, to regulate the heavenly bodies, and to pour down his beams of light to cheer and comfort man, and to give life and fertility to the vegetable world. How admirable is the moon in her waning and increasing to maturity, and the stars, the number and dimensions of which God alone knows, and all of which He can call by their respective names. Behold the regularity of their courses, how they illumine and beautify the night, and how sublimely they speak to us of our God. Behold this vast and ponderous earth poised in the air, and firm without a foundation. Behold the boundless seas and oceans nestling in the bosom of this earth, one time lashed into fury, and again sleeping in a tranquil repose, and yet God restrains their power by the feeble sands on the beach. The streams and rivers produce, by their slow or rapid courses, many and varied charms, and many good and useful advantages to man. The numberless and different species of birds, fishes, and other animals inhabiting the earth, the seas, and the air, live and are fed by the providence of God. The seasons succeed each other with a marvellous precision and regularity, and each produces something good and useful for us. The varied beauties of the flowers, fruits, and plants proclaim the glory of God, and in their silent splendour invite us to sing with the royal prophet : " O Lord, how manifold are thy works ; in thy wisdom thou didst make them all."[1] But all these things, so beautiful and grand, tell us that He who made them is grander and more beautiful still, and that He alone should be adored and loved in His works.

What then are all creatures ?

They are the expressions of the eternal Word and the work of Christ as God, over which He holds a sovereign control, and which He uses for His own wise purposes, and are, in this world, like the instruments or skilled workmen of a great laboratory, which He uses in the execution of His works. The Word has drawn from nothing every one of these creatures, even the smallest and most contemptible, and every one of them is useful for something, although we do not know the good it is destined to do, because He who created them did not do so in vain, and we must regard all His creatures as the instruments of the power, the justice, and the mercy of Jesus.

How are these creatures the instruments of His power and justice ?

All the great prodigies of the old testament make us understand

[1] Psalms, civ. 24.

sufficiently well how God employs His creatures to exercise His power and justice. Fire, hail, snow, ice, the winds and tempests, perform with precision what He commands them; all obey Him, and no creature dares to resist His will. Fire and brimstone reduced five abominable cities to ashes, because God commanded them to do so. Hailstones destroy the crops, and ice and snow ruin plants and blast our trees when He pleases, and just as He orders. Pharaoh's army was entombed in the waters of the Red Sea, because God had resolved to punish that infamous king. The earth opened and swallowed up Core, Dathan, and Abiron. The sun stopped in his course, or rather the earth suspended its revolution, in order to afford time and light to the people of God to conquer their enemies. He makes use of flies and other insects to punish the Egyptians, and, in a word, He could use any of His creatures, no matter how vile or diminutive, to exercise His justice upon those He has determined to chastise. O Lord, how terrible are your punishments against the wicked; but I shall have no fear of your creatures, because they cannot harm me if you do not command them.

How are creatures the instruments of the mercy of Jesus?

God, through His infinite power or goodness, could make us submit by a single act of His will, without the aid of His creatures; but He makes use of them to preserve the life He has given us. He makes His sun to rise over the wicked as well as the good, and His rain to fall on the fields of the sinful as well as upon those of the just. By an effect of His mercy and goodness, He makes our corn and other fields productive, and hence supplies us with food and raiment; but this great mercy and goodness appear much more manifest in His works of grace. He makes use of water in baptism to signify how that sacrament purifies our souls, and makes us children of God and heirs to the kingdom of heaven. He makes use of bread and wine to change their entire substance into the entire substance of His own adorable body and blood, in order to nourish us with Himself, and to make us live like Him, and He makes use of oil to signify the diffusion and effects of invisible grace. Oh, how great is the mercy and power of our Jesus! Therefore, let us regard all creatures in the order of nature and grace either as the expressions or the instruments of His power, or His wisdom, or His goodness, or His mercy, or as the ministers of His justice. If we have a lively faith in these truths, everything we see occurring in this world will appear as the effects of the power, the justice, the goodness, and the mercy of Jesus, by whom all things and all creatures were made.

EJACULATION TO JESUS BY WHOM ALL CREATURES WERE MADE.

O my adorable Jesus, made flesh for love of us, eternal and immutable in your wisdom, you are the omnipotent architect of this vast universe; you have extracted it from nothingness, and the creatures in it loudly tell me that you are their God and that you have given them the existence they now possess; you have fixed upon them all the indelible impress of your divine perfections; and your invisible grandeur, your omnipotence, and your divinity are visible in all your works ever since you created them, in order that we could know, adore, and honour you in all you have made. O my Lord and my God, grant me grace to sing without ceasing, with the royal prophet; "Great are the works of the Lord, sought out according to all His wills. His work is praise and magnificence, and His justice continueth for ever and ever."[1]

But, Lord Jesus, as I commenced to admire your grandeur and your mercies, I will continue to do so. Although you are the creator of this terrestrial and uncivilized world, you are also the creator of another incomparably more beautiful and more worthy of admiration, and of which this world, which must perish, is a very poor figure. There are other heavens and another spiritual and celestial earth; there are other seas and oceans, another sun and moon, and other trees and mountains, and you are the author of them all. Your Church is the spiritual world you have created, that earth which you founded on an unchangeable and infallible basis, the truth of which can never fail, nor its stability be overturned.

In this Church we see the souls of the just, as if in the heaven where you dwell, and which you fill with the presence of your holy spirit; in this Church perfect Christians shine in this world, where they live, like stars in the firmament on a dark night. In her we behold Jesus, the sun of justice, enlightening the spiritual world; in her we find Christians who, like mountains upon their foundations, are firm in faith and immovable in the hope which the gospel gives them, and, because purpled with the blood of Jesus, who is the glorious river flowing through this holy city, they are the living images of those fruitful trees bearing fruit in all seasons. The sacraments are so many welling fountains of living water in which the just find refreshing draughts to satisfy their thirst for justice, and to cool the heats of concupiscence.

Oh, with what countless beauties does this spiritual world abound,

[1] Psalms, cx. 2, 3.

and how full of wonders are those spiritual deserts and solitudes where so many penitents live, like the sparrows on the housetop, in retirement and in penitential works, where they sigh like doves and run after life-giving waters like thirsty deer after refreshing fountains. And, after all, this holy city on earth is only a figure of that celestial and eternal world in which we hope to dwell for ever. Alas! my Lord Jesus, you have condescended to send me into this terrestrial world to be, as it were, the mouthpiece of inanimate creatures, to trumpet your praises through them; and you have placed me in this spiritual world to sanctify me first, and to glorify me afterwards in your own heavenly and eternal world. I entered by my temporal birth into this terrestrial world, I entered into my spiritual birth through baptism, and at my death I hope to enter heaven through your infinite mercy.

CHAPTER III.

ON JESUS, IN WHOM AND BY WHOM ALL THINGS SUBSIST.

How are we to understand the words of St. Paul to the Colossians, "All things subsist in Christ."[1]

He wants to teach us that Christ is not only the creator of all things, but that all things subsist in Him. 1st. Because He sustains and directs them by His omnipotent power, and after He created them from nothing He preserves them by His will; He operates and acts on them by His power, and regulates their movements by His wisdom.

2nd. All things subsist in Christ much more perfectly than the idea of the work exists in the mind of the workman, or than the idea of the edifice exists in the intellect of the architect; because once that the work or the edifice is constructed, it exists independent of the workman or the architect. Not so with Jesus, for all things have their being in Him, all things have their life and motion in and through Him; and hence Solomon says: "How could anything endure, if thou wouldst not, or be preserved if not called by thee."[2]

3rd. Let us strive to know this important truth, that all things subsist in Christ through the merits of His incarnation and death. When man offended his Creator and abused the creatures which God made for his use and comfort, his crime rendered him unworthy of life, and consequently unworthy to use those creatures necessary for the preservation of it; and hence we should believe that if God had not

[1] Coloss. i. 17. [2] Wisdom, ii. 26.

the reparation of man in view, He would have destroyed this world forthwith on Adam's fall, because then there could be no need for its continued existence. But this world was preserved on account of the coming of Jesus, and He has acquired for us, through His merits, the right to use creatures when necessary; and since no temporal, spiritual, or eternal good was due to the sinner, it follows that it was through Jesus only that all things subsist, and by His incarnation and death we received the right to use them.

How are we to understand that all things subsist not only in Jesus, but for Jesus?

We must understand that this visible and terrestrial world and all the creatures it contains, subsist to form the entire mystic body of Jesus, that is its chief and its members. Now, to carry out the designs of God in the formation of this mystic body, the sun travels over our heads, the seasons succeed each other, everything was made, and all things happen in this world, viz., persecutions, wars, revolutions, the confusion of seasons, famines, pestilence, and the overthrow of this world at the end of time. The reprobation of the Jews, the vocation of the Gentiles, the great changes which occurred in the Roman empire, the bloody persecutions waged by tyrants against the early Christians—all these great events which happened in all ages are in the designs of God to form the mystic body of Jesus; and when this mystic body of Jesus is fully formed, this world shall come to an end. All the great events which are to usher in the end of time will develop this glorious body in its fulness and perfection; and when the membership shall be complete, this world will be destroyed, and we will see that Jesus, the chief, and the members are the end of God's designs, and that consequently all things exist for Christ alone.

Now that these truths are established, what use should we make of creatures and of this visible world?

To answer this question we must suppose five things—1st. It is certain that no creature, however grand and excellent, can be the end of man, and therefore to love or attach one's self to it as his last end would be to demolish the beautiful order which commands us to prefer God before all created things.

2nd. Jesus holds sovereign dominion over all creatures and over us and all we possess. We are not so far masters of the things we possess as to dispose of them as we wish, because in such a disposition our will and desires must be regulated by the will of God, who is the supreme master of them all.

3rd. It is certain that this world was made by the Word in order that we could contemplate the creatures it contains, and thus arrive at the knowledge of the author of all things; and that in admiring these wonderful works of God, we would have a subject for that praise and thanksgiving we should render to Him who created them.

4th. It is certain, according to the opinion of pagan as well as Catholic philosophers, that this world is as a temple of the Divinity and filled with His majesty, His power, His justice, and His mercy; that all creatures are the ornaments of this temple; that no man is permitted to profane it; and that mankind has been introduced into it to adore God, to pay Him the most respectful homage, and to humble himself before Him.

5th. It is likewise certain that Christ created this world as a temporary dwelling for man, that he should live and labour in it for his salvation, and that he could use creatures for his necessities, but not to offend God.

What use, therefore, ought we to make of creatures?

We make bad use of them when we use them to gratify concupiscence, because charity is the principle directing us to use them well, and when we use them otherwise we abuse them. Therefore, we must—1st. Use creatures so as to have no attachment to them; we must use them, as Christ teaches, as if using them not, and we must use them according to His will, and never through cupidity or for the indulgence of our passions, because we should never consider ourselves masters of what we possess, but merely caretakers and dispensers. We must dispose of them according to the rules and instructions marked out for us by our Redeemer, and when He demands we must be ready to give Him an account of how we cared them.

2nd. We ought to use creatures with great frugality and moderation, because one of the reasons why the Son of God became man was, to teach us to live temperately in this world, to retrench all superfluities, and to come down to the condition of our state of life. It is certain that if we wished to live according to the maxims of the Gospel, and as Christians ought to live, we would soon discover how easily we could abstain from, and how justly we ought to deprive ourselves of, many things which cupidity or the bad example of this world makes us now believe really necessary. Ecclesiasticus tells us what are the principal things necessary for the preservation of man's existence when he says: "The chief thing for man's life is water, and bread, and clothing, and a house to cover shame;"[1] and again the

[1] Eccles. xxix. 27.

same inspired penman says: "The principal things necessary for the life of man are water, fire, and iron, salt, milk, and bread and honey, and the cluster of grape, and oil, and clothing."[1] Rich meats and rare dresses, costly furniture and superb edifices, are not necessary for the preservation of life, because a few plain things will suffice for him who desires to lead a Christian life. What an awful thing it is that those simple things, which were a source of good to the saints, are now changed into sources of evil, on account of the bad use wicked people make of the necessaries given them by God for their support.

3rd. It is necessary to use creatures with great precaution, because ever since the fall of our first parents they served as a snare and a temptation to man. The devil conceals himself in those unnecessaries in order to tempt us, and hence if we love a single one of them, we do so against order, and abuse it. This is the reason we pray before and after meals, and because, says St. Paul, "it is by prayer and the Word that the meats we use are sanctified."[2] It is for this reason also that the Church, guided by the spirit of God, established prayers to bless the most part of the things we make use of, in order to ask God not to permit us to misemploy, by offending Him, the things He gave us for our use.

4th. We must use creatures with sentiments of great humility, because we have made ourselves unworthy of them by our offences against God, and by becoming His enemies, and because it is only by grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that we have any right to make use of them. Christ did not die to give us a right to use them according to our wicked and disorderly desires, but in accordance with our legitimate requirements, and to perform good works through them, and therefore we should feel very grateful for having all that is necessary, since we have no right to anything more.

5th. We should use those created things with acts of thanksgiving, because we hold the little we possess by an act of God's goodness and mercy, and not on account of our industry, skill, or chance; and hence when we use them, we do so as the free gifts of God. He gives us the bread we eat and the wool that makes our clothing, and this is why He tells us to pray every day, "Give us this day our daily bread," and when He gives it, to thank Him for His goodness. All things belong to Jesus, and all come from Him, and all should be in connection with Him.

Who are they who abused and still abuse the comforts of creatures? The pagans and the impious paid them divine honours, instead

[1] Eccles. xxxix. 31. [2] 1 Timothy, iv. 5.

of to Him who created them. "They imagined," says Solomon, "either the fire, or the wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun and moon to be the gods that ruled the world, and they adored them."[1] But how much are those people to be pitied who, while taking pleasure in contemplating the beauties of creatures, should have known how much more beautiful He ought to be who is the ruler of them, because it is the author of all beauty that gave existence to all those things.[2] But how could they see when they were blinded by voluntary ignorance and the gratification of their passions? Others, still more blind, adored quadrupeds, reptiles, flies, and other insects; and they adored even trees, and metallic gods, the work of their own hands. Would to God that men would cease thus abusing creatures! St. Paul says that the avaricious man adores his gold; and do we not see thousands bestowing greater care on their cattle than on the suffering poor of Christ? The vain proud man abuses God's creatures when he uses them to gratify his vanity by costly dresses and expensive furniture, the ambitious man abuses them when he uses them as bribes to ascend to worldly grandeur, the unchaste abuse them whenever they corrupt by crime the purity and innocence of their souls, the passionate abuse them by their curses, the vindictive by their thirst for vengeance, the debauched by too much wine and expensive entertainments—in a word, God's creatures are, and have been, abused in almost every state and condition of life; and hence St. Paul says: "That the creature was unwillingly made subject to vanity."[3]

Will God always leave creatures subject to this violent and terrible abuse daily made by man upon them?

No, He will not, for He assures us in the sacred Scriptures that a time will come when He will deliver creatures from the corruption to which they are now subjected. "I will return," He says, "and take away my corn in its season, and my wine in its season, and I will set at liberty my wool and my flax which covered her disgrace."[4] A time will come when He will arm His creatures to avenge themselves on their enemies; when this vast universe will fight for Him against the foolish ones of this world; when He will rouse up and agitate the elements, and thus make use of every object the sinner abused to punish him for the bad use he made of them; and then the heavens and the earth, in conjunction with all things on and in them, will rise up to accuse and punish man for the bad use he made of them.

[1] Wisdom, xiii. 2. [2] Wisdom, xiii. 3, 4. [3] Rom. viii. 20. [4] Osee, ii. 9.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, IN WHOM AND BY WHOM ALL THINGS SUBSIST.

It is only in you and through you, my Lord and Saviour, that this vast universe and all it contains exist; you have given them existence and preserved them, by your power and mercy, from ruin. They exist only because you love them, and have destined them to accomplish the grand designs you have in store for the elect. They would have perished at the fall of Adam, only that you intended to become man, and to die to satisfy your Father's offended justice, and thus merit their preservation and stay your Father's hand from destroying them; and hence the whole earth must be full of your mercy, and all creatures publish it. Dear Lord, you continued them ever since in existence that I might use them to come to you. I know that this world subsists only for you and to form all the members of your mystic body. And, oh, how beautiful is this world when considered in that admirable connection which it has with you.

O Word made flesh, you who are the first and the last in all the designs of God! yes, my Jesus, you are the end, the fulness, and the consummation of all things, and it is only in connection with you that we ought to regard all that exists. O my divine Jesus, I know that all the riches, the dignities, and the goods of this world, and all other creatures, have been extracted from nothing by God, not to serve the cupidity and disorderly passions of man, because He could not have in view a design so unworthy of His wisdom and sanctity as that; but it was you, my adorable Jesus, and your mystic body He had chiefly in view.

Therefore, all things present and future, and all that this visible world contains, is for you and your members, that they may use them for your glory and their own satisfaction. Could it be possible that I could use them to satisfy my passions and my irregular desires? I confess, my Jesus, that I did not understand, up to the present, the obligations I was under to use creatures for a pious purpose only, because I often used them to gratify my foolish vanity. It is time now to use them as penances, to sacrifice them to the glory of God, to relieve the necessities of my neighbour, and to sanctify myself by using them moderately and piously for the future. Faith teaches me, dear Lord, that you became man, that you died on the cross, and that you led a life of poverty and sufferings, not to give me a right to use creatures to gratify my pride, my vanity, my pleasures, or any other passion whatsoever. How could I act so against your mysteries without committing a sin? And yet I often did so, and the only

recompense I received for doing so is a saddening grief wounding my inmost soul. But I am resolved to do penance and deprive myself of everything not absolutely necessary for me, because I know that I have lost by my crimes all the right which I could have over the things of this world. I feel myself unworthy of any kind of spiritual or temporal blessing, that I merit nothing whatsoever, and that I can never justly complain of any privation or neglect, for I deserve all and far more than I receive.

All creatures should rise up against me to avenge the injury I did them when I used them to offend their author and creator. And, my dear Lord Jesus, only for your great mercy to me you would have armed them long since to inflict death upon me, as you will do on the last day against the reprobate. I know, my God, that I enjoy the use of your creatures as a pure gift of your grace; grant, therefore, that I may always use them with sentiments of the most profound humility and continued thanksgiving; grant that I may use them as if not using them, and that my heart, which was made to love you only, may never become attached to them.

I was not created for them, because they are not my God, and hence can never fully satisfy me; and because I know their weakness and their nothingness, and that if I possessed them all I would still be poor and miserable. My heart is too large to be satisfied with gold or silver, with costly garments and expensive furniture, or with the joys and pleasures of this life; you alone, my Jesus, God and man, you alone can fill and satisfy it here and hereafter, because you alone are greater than my heart and than all created things united. All things are your work, they exist in you and for you, and if they pass away and one succeeds another, it is only to accomplish your designs and to complete the formation of that grand body of which you are the chief. May I see them pass away without regret, and may I always long for the happy day when I shall see all the members reunited to their chief ascending up to heaven to sing the mercies of the Lord for ever. Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

ON JESUS, THE INHERITOR OF ALL THINGS.

How are we to understand the words of St. Paul when he says: "In those days God hath spoken to us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things?"[1]

These words teach us that Jesus has been constituted master of all things, that God gave Him dominion over all creatures, and that He possesses all His Father's goods as an inheritance due to Him as the only Son of God. St. Paul wishes, likewise, to convey that the moment the Son of God became man, the Father delivered up to Him and placed at His disposal the absolute ownership of the entire universe. As the Son was always equal to the Father, so too He was equal owner of all things with the Father; but the moment He became man, He was established in the ownership as God and man, to renew it, to put all things in their proper place, and to sanctify by His presence and His benedictions all the works of the Lord, ruined by sin. But this renovation will not take place till the end of time.

When did Jesus enter into this heritage of all things?

The Royal Psalmist tells us when he says: "Thou hast made Him a little less than the angels (by His union with our nature), thou hast crowned Him with glory and honour, and hast set Him over the works of thy hands; thou hast subjected all things under His feet—all sheep and oxen; moreover, also, the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea."[2] He has given His Divine Son all these as a recompense for the annihilation to which He subjected Himself for love of us; but after His resurrection all power in heaven and upon earth belonged to Him, not because His Father had given them to Him as His only heir, but, also, because He merited all by His mysteries.

What use did Jesus make of all creatures, His inheritance?

He did not do what so many wicked children have done, who spent in the gratification of their desires the inheritances left them by their parents—1st. Because He preserved with great care all the goods of His inheritance.

2nd. Because He used this universe as an offering to His Father, and to show that He received all from Him, because He sanctified the earth by dwelling on it and by watering it with His tears and His

[1] Heb. i. 2. [2] Psalms, viii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

blood, and because all creatures which contributed to His sufferings have done so as so many instruments to satisfy His Father's offended justice.

3rd. He employed creatures, given to Him by His Father, to make known that He was God as well as His Father. For instance, the sea became a pathway beneath His feet, the winds and the tempests obeyed Him, He changed water into wine, with a little clay He gave sight to the blind man, He feeds five thousand persons with five or seven barley loaves, at His death the sun lost his light; in a word, He uses all the elements to manifest His own and His Father's glory.

4th. Jesus has been living in His inheritance to work out our salvation, and to reconcile us to God through the ineffable mysteries He performed during His mortal life, using creatures through necessity, doing penance, enduring hunger and thirst, labouring with His hands, and often spending whole nights in prayer.

5th. He employed His inheritance for the instruction of man, because He has taken comparisons from almost all His creatures to illustrate and explain His sublime truths. One time He uses the seed placed in the earth to teach us how we abuse the word of God; then He introduces the grain and the chaff mixed together on the threshing floor, to show how the good and the wicked must be mixed together in the Church; again He speaks of the fruitful and the barren trees, to point out the practical and the bad Catholic; He speaks of the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, and the lilies of the valleys, to show forth His providence; He employs treasures and precious jewels, to make us comprehend with what unremitting care we should search after virtue, which is the treasure of the gospel; He speaks of the meadow and the vine, to give us some knowledge of His Church, and to make us feel that we should be as ingrafted on it as the vine branch is to the trunk; He speaks of the dove and the serpent, to teach us that in our commerce with this world we should practise prudence and simplicity; He rests at a fountain and asks the Samaritan woman for a drink of water, to illustrate the admirable effects of grace, and while discharging the functions of His own inheritance He taught us how to employ ours to the glory of God and our own salvation.

Have Christians a part in the inheritance of Jesus?

All true Christians who live up to their vocation, and who are so united to Him as to make only one Son of God with Him, all those are His co-heirs, and hence have a part in His inheritance of

the present goods, but not in those of eternity; because St. Paul says: "All things are yours and you are Christ's."[1] We belong to Christ, and because we do belong to Him, and that He belongs to us, we have a part in His inheritance; and hence He grants us the use of creatures to support life, as a means of salvation, and to gain that eternal inheritance promised by God to His children.

Has not God established Christ inheritor of His Church as well as of this visible world?

He has, because Christ acquired His terrestrial inheritance in order only that creatures would be useful to Him in the formation of His Church, acquired by His blood. But, properly speaking, the elect are the inheritance of Jesus, because His Father gave them to Him when He said: "I will give thee the Gentiles for thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."[2] And Christ Himself says to His Father: "Thine they were, and to me thou gavest them."[3] They belong to God because He created them, and He has given them to Christ to sanctify and to save them; and hence the Church and her members belong to Jesus on the title of that donation which His Father made of them to Him. We belong to Him not only by virtue of His Father's donation to Him, but by virtue of His labours and sufferings which redeemed us, and also by the gift of the Holy Spirit, who has fixed His impress indelibly upon our souls. We belong to Him also by the gift of grace, which preserves and restrains us from losing ourselves. We belong to Him by the gift of faith, through which we submit to Him in all things. And we belong to Him by the gift of charity when we unite ourselves to Him and make only one with Him; and hence as we belong to Him we are His inheritance. Therefore we should never forget to make Him our inheritance and our only good, and we should exclaim with the Royal Psalmist, let worldings seek after earthly and temporal possessions, but "the Lord is my portion for ever," and in Him is all my treasure and all my riches for time and eternity.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, HEIR OF ALL THINGS.

O my Saviour, the earth and all it contains, and the world and all who inhabit it, belong to you on the title of the donation made of them to you by your Father, for He gave all things into your hands and established you, His only Son, His universal heir, and hence He gave you all that this visible and terrestrial world contains. He gave

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23. [2] Psalms, xx. 8. [3] John, xvii. 6.

only a small portion of it to the ancient patriarchs, our fathers; but you, in whom all nations are blessed, you received the dominion of the whole universe.

There is no creature, however small or insignificant, that is not yours, and you can dispose of all creatures just as you wish, because you gave them and you can take them away when you please, because all are bound to obey you, and none dare resist your will. But how did it happen, my Divine Jesus, that though you were absolute master of all things, you had not whereon to repose your head? The reason is that you wished to teach those who possess the riches of this world, that they should deprive themselves of many superfluities in order to do penance and to live according to the rules of the gospel, or to discharge the indispensable obligation of relieving the necessities of the poor; and you also wished by this self-denial to instruct the poor how to suffer poverty, and to endure the privation of some things necessary for life.

The poor are so because such is your wish, and the rich are so because you have given them those riches. My Jesus, you are supreme master of all we want, of all we possess, and of all the goods of this world, and you proclaimed this dominion when you commanded your people, in the Old Law, to offer up the first-fruits of the earth and of all animals as well. We are not such absolute masters of the things we legitimately possess as to dispose of them according to caprice, because we are only the depositories or trustees of them, and hence we can only dispose of them according to your will and the rules of your justice. Ah! dear Lord, make this principle known to us, so that we may be able to regulate our conduct in accordance with those truths.

If we do so, will we complain when we lose any portion of our earthly goods, will we murmur or think it strange when we are told not to use those goods in useless expenditure, in transitory pleasures and debaucheries? No, we will not; and hence we shall not be heard exclaiming, with so many blinded worldlings, I am master of my own means and can do with them as I please. No, no, my God, this is not the language nor are these the sentiments which faith inspires; for you alone, my Jesus, are the true master and universal inheritor of all your Father's goods. But, dear Lord, you have received an inheritance still more considerable in the Church, which your Father gave you to found, to sanctify, to be its prop, its defender, its prince, its chief and its Saviour, its glorifier and its eternal possessor in the bosom of your Father. Do not, my God,

permit strangers to come upon your inheritance, nor nations to trample it under foot.

Protect this vineyard which your Father has given you, be its guardian against so many enemies plotting its destruction. Tyrants persecuted it, scandalous Christians made it contemptible in the eyes of strangers, and heretics pierced its bosom with their false doctrines and apostacies. But who is able to prevail against you, my Jesus, you who hold your elect in your hands; and as your Father, who is greater and more powerful than all men and hell combined, has given them to you, He will be with them; and who then will be able to conquer them? My Jesus, you love this inheritance, and it is your love for those dwelling in it that constitutes their strength and their consolation, because nothing can separate them from it and from you.

My Saviour, you now hold possession of them through the plenitude of your power, the abundance of your gifts, the participation of your mysteries, the infusion of your Holy Spirit, the merits of your death, the gifts of faith and of the Holy Ghost; and by the infusion of your charity you will possess them hereafter by the overwhelming communication of your glory. Take possession of me, dear Lord, in order that I may be able to possess you; be my inheritance that I may be yours. As you, my divine Saviour, are the Father and the heritage of your children, the riches and the king of your subjects, the spouse and the portion of your servants, the God and the happiness of your creatures, the chief and the life of your members, the sanctifier and glorifier of your elect, grant me grace, dear Jesus, to be one of those number in order that I may be your co-heir in heaven, that your goods may be mine, that your holiness may be mine also, and that your peace and your glory may be my peace and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

THIRD INSTRUCTION.

ON THE CONNECTION OF JESUS WITH MANKIND IN GENERAL, AND WITH CHRISTIANS IN PARTICULAR.

All we have previously said touching the admirable connections of Jesus with His Father, with creatures, and with this terrestrial world, manifests His grandeur, His equality with His Father, His power, His wisdom, and the sovereign sway He wields over all things. But the connection He has with mankind in general, and with Christians in particular, makes us feel very vividly indeed His love, His mercy, His grace, His sentiments, His dispositions, and the grand intentions He entertains for us in this world and in the next; and in addition to all these, the different characters He has assumed to instruct us in order to unite Himself to us and to save us in eternity.

What connection has Jesus with mankind in general, and with Christians in particular?

He is our true happiness and grandeur, our mediator and our redeemer, our reparation, our priest, our bishop, our victim, our temple and our altar, our architect and our model, our father and our brother, our chief and our pastor, our doctor and our physician, our king and our spouse, our life, our way, our truth, and our light. He is the port through which we should enter on our vocation and into eternal life, the foundation and the corner-stone on which our spiritual edifice must be built, and He is the bread of our soul, the author and the consummator of our faith; and if we die in His love, He will be our loving judge, our glory, and our happiness in heaven. Every one of these characters, and many more found in the Sacred Scriptures, requires a particular instruction, but we must be content with an explanation of the most important of them, and hence we will begin with the first above mentioned.

CHAPTER I.

ON JESUS, THE GRANDEUR OF THE CHRISTIAN.

How do we know that Jesus constitutes the grandeur of the Christian?

We all have a strong and natural inclination to be great, and we feel an extreme dislike for everything calculated to humble us. It is not an evil to aspire to be great, provided our aspiration desires true greatness. God alone is great, and we never can be so but when united to Him, and we cannot be united to Him till we are united to Jesus, not only in the general union in which all men have their being, their life, and their motions from God, but in that union of grace which makes us so live in Jesus as to form with Him only one man. We are united to Jesus by faith, which causes Him to dwell in our hearts; and we are united to Him by charity, which makes us live in God and God in us; and we are united to Him only when we renounce ourselves and everything in this world; and hence this union which we have with Jesus is that which constitutes all our greatness.

How can we prove that we are great only when united to Jesus?

There are two or three reasons to prove that we are great only on account of the grace that unites us to Jesus. 1st. It is manifest from the intention which the Son of God had in becoming man, which was to lift us from the degradation into which sin had plunged us, and to place us in that position which we should naturally occupy, only for our fall into sin. But, alas! how were we to come forth from that abyss? There was one means which Jesus in His wisdom and mercy adopted, and that was to unite Himself to man in general by His Incarnation, and to man in particular by the sacraments, by the infusion of the Holy Ghost, and by grace; and communicating Himself in this ineffable manner He makes us become by grace what He is by nature, and thus He draws us from the abyss of sin and elevates us to true greatness.

2nd. St. Augustine says: "We become like things we love, and so much so that if we become attached to anything bad, contemptible, or vile, we appear wicked like the thing we love, we debase ourselves and lose the dignity we possessed; so, too, if we become attached to anything great or holy, we become like that to which we became attached. If you love the earth," says St. Augustine, "you are earthly, and if you love God you will become a man all divine."

St. Paul entertained the same sentiment when He wrote: "Know you not that he who is joined to a harlot is one body, for they shall be, saith he, two in one flesh; and he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him;"[1] and hence we can say, in a certain sense, that the man who loves Jesus, whose grandeur is incomprehensible, is another Christ with Him.

In order to establish the third proof we must necessarily suppose that grand principle in religion which declares that God sees nothing great in anything but in Jesus, His Son, and that nothing pleases Him but what He sees in that Son, in whom He has placed all His love and complacency; and hence we can draw from that principle the just conclusion that man is nothing, possesses nothing, and is unable to perform anything worthy of God without Jesus. We will now explain all these assertions. 1st. We are nothing without Jesus, because if men depend upon their own authority, or their power, or upon certain distinctions which they possess, or upon the advantages of nature, or upon the goods of fortune, and, seeing themselves endowed with those things, they imagine themselves something great, they will find that if they are not in Jesus they are nothing before God, who knows and judges all things according to truth. This is why St. Paul says: "If anyone thinketh himself something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself,"[2] because all human glory vanishes like a dream when we awake, and because the prophet says that God reduces them all into nothingness. But the glory which the Christian possesses does not pass away in time, but rather increases when he enters a blessed eternity, while he who lives and dies without Jesus will be plunged into an everlasting humiliation.

What is a man without Jesus, and what is he when united to Him?

A man without Jesus is a member without life or motion, a member withering and corrupting; and because he is separated from his chief, he is like the vine branch cut off from the vine tree, which quickly decays, produces no fruit, and is only fit to be cast into the fire to be burned. He is like a stone which fell from an edifice and was broken to pieces, and useless any more. He is a spouse repudiated by her bridegroom, because she became the dishonor, the shame, and the ignominy of her husband and the public. He is, in fine, excommunicated and unworthy of anything—a man whom God regards with horror as His enemy, and who, if he should die in that

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 16, 17. [2] Gal. vi. 3.

state, will have no fellowship with Him in heaven. If a man's heart, and soul, and body, and actions, and sufferings be not united to Jesus, they are a sin and an abomination in His sight; but if he have the happiness to dwell in Christ, and Christ in him, then all within him is great indeed.

1st. He is great in his birth, because he is born of God not only by creation like the rest of mankind, but by a participation in God's divine spirit.

2nd. He is great in his person, because he is the child of God, and his soul the spouse of the God of heaven and the earth; and by doing the will of God he becomes the betrothed, the sister, the holy nation, the chosen people, and the friend of God, participating in all the qualities of Jesus, and priest and king like Him.

3rd. He is great in his desires, because the desires of him in whom Christ lives are not like those of other men, whose only longings are for the things here below; but his yearnings are after God alone and the possession of heavenly and eternal glory.

4th. He is great in his conversations, because he who is of this earth speaks only of earthly things, but the true Christian speaks only of things on high. It is God Himself who speaks from his mouth, because it is the spirit of God that speaks within him, and not himself, and therefore how could he speak of any but great things?

5th. He is great in his designs, because he does not want to conquer or subject the world to his sway, like another Alexander the Great, and because his only desire is to gain heaven, to subjugate his passions, to triumph over his invisible enemies, to soar above the contemptible things of this world, and, what neither the Cæsars nor the Alexanders could ever achieve, to despise the glories and pleasures of this world.

6th. The actions of him who is united to Jesus are great in their principle and in their end, because their only principle is to gain and to hold the grace of God, His spirit and His love, and their only end is His glory and eternal life. Very small actions when performed from such motives are greater than actions most brilliant, because things which appear great in the eyes of men are, when performed without Christ, an abomination in the eyes of God; and things, the most contemptible in the eyes of worldings, are greatest before God; and therefore a glass of water given in the name of Jesus is more meritorious than to distribute one's property amongst the poor without the love of Jesus.

7th. The man who is united to Jesus is great in his lowliness, because to be despised and to suffer contempt when we could have vengeance; to be hated and maligned, and yet to love our persecutors; to be wise in the sight of God, and yet to pass for a fool and a hypocrite; to possess great talents, and yet to live hidden and unknown to the world; to suffer opprobrium with Jesus whilst meriting all kinds of glory—this it is that makes a Christian great and exalted; and hence St. Peter says: "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed for that which is of the honour, glory, and power of God, and that which is His spirit resteth upon you."[1] Job upon a dung-hill, David persecuted by Saul, Joseph imprisoned by Pharaoh, St. Peter scourged, St. Paul a prisoner—all these and other such holy men were much greater in their chains and humiliations than all the Roman emperors were after all their achievements.

In what way does man appear lowly and abandoned when he is not united to Christ, and how does he appear grand when in union with Him?

He appears lowly and abandoned, because he can do nothing when separated from Christ, and Christ Himself says: "Without me, you can do nothing,"[2] that is, you cannot think, or speak, or act in any way pleasing to God, or meritorious of eternal life. A man has power to destroy himself, and even to cause his own death; but he cannot restore his lost life nor repair the ruin done to his soul. If he is fortified with Jesus he can do all things, and if the grace of Christ operate in him nothing will be difficult to him. Behold what wonderful things those young persons were able to do who renounced the world to follow Christ crucified. How many others triumphed over the threats and seductions of this world, and who reformed their criminal habits, which before appeared insurmountable.

In what other way does the helplessness of man appear when he is separated from Jesus, and how does his grandeur appear when united to Him?

Man without Jesus not only is nothing, and can do nothing, but he has nothing, no matter how rich in worldly wealth he may be; and if he possess Jesus he has all things, because the Father in giving us His Son gave us all things with Him; and hence St. Paul says: "For all things are yours, whether it be Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come, for all are yours."[3] They are given to aid us in the work of our conver-

[1] Epistle, iv. 14. [2] John, xiv. 5. [3] 1 Cor. iii. 22.

sion, our perfection, and our salvation. The world will help in this great work if we live as strangers in it, and if we use it in conformity with God's holy will; the present will aid us if we live only for the glory of God; death will assist in it if we bear its penalties with patience, and in the hope of a happy future; things present and things future will strengthen us to accomplish this glorious end if we make a moderate use of them for our maintenance only and for the glory of God, and if weardently believe and desire the blessings of the future.

The grace of Christ, His truth, His blood, His word, His spirit, His heart, His sacraments, and all He has belong to the true Christian; and as Christ said that all He had belonged to His Father, so the true Christian can say that all he has belongs to Christ. Oh, how highly does this glorious union with Jesus exalt the sinful man. And who is he who will not long for this union, and who will neglect to acquire it with all the powers of his mind and body?

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE GRANDEUR OF THE CHRISTIAN.

It is from you, O Word of God, by whom I have been created, that this strong inclination comes which I feel in my inmost soul to be all that is grand and exalted, and you have impressed it on my soul in order that I may seek only what is truly grand. But, alas, where shall I find what I desire—shall it be in the riches of this world or the esteem and approbation of man? These have nothing great in them but what the imagination of man has given them, because they are all shadows, smoke, and phantoms, which vanish and pass away in a moment, and which leave him who is not united to Christ an everlasting humiliation. You alone, my God, King of ages, immortal and invisible, you alone are powerful and most high. You alone are true greatness, and, when united to you alone, I possess true greatness, for then I will be exalted above all visible things, and only one thing with you.

O my divine Jesus, what am I if not united to you? My soul is then in darkness, ignorance, error, and illusion; my heart is dead in your sight, the slave of my passions, an abyss of iniquity, a monster in malice, and the centre of all corruption, and my works and my actions, however great and holy they may appear, irritate and offend your Father. Without you, my dear Redeemer, they are like the works of the proud Pharisee, the pagan philosopher, the crafty politician, or the hypocrite who acts only for his own interests or in obedience to some ruling passion. In such circumstances my suffer-

ings would only be the pains of the impatient criminal, of the proud, and the unjust.

Finally, without you, my Jesus, I am an object of hatred before God, for He detests the impious, and his impiety. All the great ones of this world, all those heirs of iniquity who aspired to be God's whilst they were mere men, men stained with a thousand crimes, all these were detestable, because they had not Jesus. I am nothing, my adorable Saviour, without you; and who can comprehend my grandeur and glory when united to you by faith and charity? You are the light of my soul, because you enlighten it by your grace, your truth, your word, and your example. When you are united to my soul, you become its justice, its life, its strength, and its sanctity; you dwell in it as in a sanctuary, and you water it with your blood. When my body is consecrated by the unction of your grace, so as to fit it as a temple for the Holy Ghost, my members become members of yours, my Jesus, and my actions, however insignificant they may be, become, through this union, worthy of God and eternal life, because He sees in them His Son, Jesus. My sufferings are His on account of this union; it is He that suffers in me, and it is He that is poor, humble, and persecuted in me. Is it possible, my Lord and my God, that you have so highly exalted me as to give me a temporal existence from nothingness, and a spiritual life by lifting me out of the slough of sin?

My dear Jesus, unite me to yourself, and separate me from everything opposed to such a union, so that I may never seek or desire any human grandeur whatsoever. All my worldly glory shall one day be eclipsed in your presence, when the king shall be on a level with the meanest of his subjects, the prince with the last of his slaves, and you alone will be grand and great. The effects of grace shall outshine, in your eyes, all other works, because you alone, and the bodies of the elect, shall appear magnificent and brilliant. My dear Jesus, the only thing I desire, after having had a part as a Christian in your humiliations here on earth, is to be associated as one of the elect in your true greatness, which can never suffer the least change or diminution. Amen.

CHAPTER II.

ON JESUS, OUR TRUE AND ONLY HAPPINESS.

What is a man who seeks his happiness elsewhere than in Jesus?

His state is a very sad one indeed, because he knows not his true happiness, nor what means to adopt to possess it. He is a deaf man, who does not hear the voice that teaches him his duties and calls him to God; he is a dumb man, unable to demand his true comforts; he is a paralytic, unable to aid or help himself; an idiot, who runs and walks on every side, not knowing where he is going; who is captivated by everything he sees, and flies from one object to another in search of a good which he does not know. He is ever restless, and agitated by the conflicting motions which hurl him down from one abyss to another; he is a dead man, whose organism is entire corruption. His soul is the abode of demons, who hold supreme possession of it, and who soothe him with the hope of a happiness which he can never find; and what is most deplorable and deserving of compassion is, that he who is in that sad and unfortunate condition knows not that he is so, but, on the contrary, believes himself happy whilst he is most miserable, because no one can find true happiness but in union with Jesus.

Why do we say we are happy when united with Jesus?

We say so for two reasons—1st. Because we find in Him everything to make us happy. 2nd. Because we find in Him a remedy for everything which could make us unhappy in this world or the next.

It is vain to seek our happiness or repose elsewhere than in Jesus. If we search for them in the pleasures and goods of this world, our recompense will invariably be weariness, disappointment, and fatigue; we will be deceived in our hopes and obliged to confess that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, and that the only good for man is to unite himself to God, and to place all his hopes in the Lord. When, therefore, we call those happy who abound in riches, we have a false idea of what true happiness is, because the only people truly happy are those who possess God with a sincere love, and because in this infinite good we have enough to fill our hearts both here and hereafter.

How do we find in Jesus everything to make us happy?

If we enter into ourselves and consult the interior light that

shines there—if we listen to the voice speaking to us from within, and reflect upon all we feel, we will soon discover all we are in search of. 1st. I know and feel how much I long to be happy. I know and feel, too, that an infinite good is necessary to fill up the boundless longings of my heart, and I know that experience must have convinced mankind of this irresistible truth; and as God alone is this infinite good, it follows that I can find my happiness only in the possession of Him.

2nd. As the soul of man is a spiritual nature, and as no created thing could be greater or more perfect, it is clear that something proportioned to her nature is necessary to satisfy her. But God is an infinite spirit, and consequently greater than our finite nature; and hence He alone can be the good of our soul, and great enough to fill and satisfy her, because as the happiness of bodies comes from other bodies, so the happiness of souls must emanate from an infinite spirit; and as that spirit is greater than our souls, it is evident that God alone can be their real and true happiness. The soul can never satisfy or nourish herself from the goods of this world, because she cannot find rest, or comfort, or nourishment in anything but in the beauty and excellence of truth, and these can only be found in God.

2nd. When I find that God is my good, I feel forthwith that I can never possess Him by the mere aid of nature; but in Jesus, the man-God, I find all that I want congregated together, and hence I see the object of my happiness and the means to possess Him. God is the infinite good which alone can make me happy, and our Redeemer, the man-God, has merited for me the grace to acquire this good—a grace which so illumines my soul that I can see the vanities and illusions of worldly goods and pleasures—a grace which makes itself mistress of my heart, and, after having detached it from everything not of God, attached it to God Himself. Happy, therefore, is the soul which possesses God. But we possess Him only when we love Him, and as we never can be truly happy till we possess what we love, therefore, in order to be happy we should not love anything but God; and St. Monica, mother of St. Augustine, says the same in her conversations on a happy life.

In what way is one happy who loves Jesus Christ?

It is almost an infallible truth that one participates in the defects or perfections, in the happiness or misery of the object of his love; and hence if I attach myself to the creature, I will partake of its weakness and its misery; and if I become attached to Jesus, I participate in His happiness. Jesus is sovereignly happy; because He

is God He is sufficient for Himself, and has no need of anything to make Him happy. All His happiness consists in knowing and loving Himself. His humanity is happy, because it is intimately united to His divinity, which constitutes His happiness and ours; and so much so that when we are attached to Jesus and participate in His happiness, we begin even in this life to enjoy this sovereign good. From this truth another follows which is worthy of your consideration—namely, that Jesus was always happy in His poverty, His sufferings, and His humiliations, even though He felt the anguish, the sadness, the fear, and the full pressure of them, so as to satisfy His Father's offended justice. So, too, a man united to Jesus can be happy in the midst of His sufferings, and even while he feels them, because it is the bad impressions which we permit crosses and humiliations to make upon our souls that make us unhappy, and not the sufferings in themselves.

How can we say that it is the bad use which we make of afflictions, or the bad impressions which we allow them to make on our souls, that make us unhappy?

To answer this question we must suppose a Christian who possessed Christ, and was solidly united to Him—a Christian loaded with evils and infirmities, and afflicted with many sorrows; or let us imagine him fallen from an exalted position into misery and degradation. Such a Christian, in the judgment and language of this world, would be very unhappy indeed; but if we reflect a little we will soon understand why this man's afflictions have made him unhappy. Does he not voluntarily permit himself to fall into dejection of mind, does he not freely deliver up his soul to murmurings, and does he not allow despair and all the promptings which his passions and human nature can suggest, to enter freely and abide in his heart? But if he would only struggle to be content with his condition, and strive to find peace in it, if he laboured to stifle every reflection that wounded him, if he blessed the Lord instead of complaining, if he could be tranquil in his disgrace, and make his will conformable to God's will, could not such a man be considered happy, not because he suffers, but on account of the holy dispositions animating him to suffer, and the motives he brings to comfort himself in his suffering state?

By what motives can a Christian united to Jesus be comforted under the evils which afflict him?

A Christian in affliction has many motives for his consolation—first, he knows that God holds such a sovereign dominion over him

and all he possesses, that He can dispose of him and them just as He wishes. His second motive is the Divine Providence which rules all things wisely, and always for the benefit of the elect. His third motive is that though God's justice punishes the criminal, it exercises great indulgence in its chastisements. His fourth motive should be that though God deprives him of great things, and reduces him to poverty and humiliation, still His mercy gives him more facility to think of his salvation, places him in a position to do penance, and, what everyone who wishes to be saved is obliged to do, helps to make him conformable to Jesus. Nothing can comfort a worldling in his crosses and humiliations, because he has nothing within himself or without to sweeten the sufferings of his soul; but a man united to Jesus is full of consolations. And St. Paul proves that when he says, if his tribulations increase, his consolations superabound, interior grace consoles him, hope sustains him, and faith teaches him that he possesses a good as long as he loves it, which no one can take from him, and Jesus is the only good which cannot be taken from him, because all other goods can, even in spite of him. Oh, what a consolation to possess that grand and only good! The second point we are about to explain is that we can find everything to make us happy only in Christ, and only in Him we can find a remedy for all our miseries.

How can we find in Jesus a remedy for all our unhappiness?

In the first place, it is necessary to admit with St. Augustine that man is placed here on earth between God, who is his sovereign good, and creatures, who are His inferiors; that he makes himself unhappy by turning his heart to those creatures, that he can be happy only in union with God, that it is our love for creatures that makes us unhappy, and that this love for creatures is our passions and depraved inclinations; and hence St. Augustine says: "You, my God, have so ordained that every irregular affection shall be a pain and a punishment to the heart of him who delivers himself up to it. Alas! how could anyone be happy whilst separated from his sovereign good?" "Misfortune," says St. Augustine, "will attend that daring soul which hopes to be happy whilst separated from you, my God, the fountain of all peace and happiness; our passions fill our souls with tribulations, and thus are the cause of our separation from God, and hence the heart of the wicked man is as a sea agitated by the tempest." The Sacred Scriptures and our daily experience furnish us with abundant examples of the numerous troubles of mind with which the passionate man is encompassed. Envy consumed

Cain, and whilst David lived anger did not give Saul a moment's repose. Avarice so tormented Achab that he could not sleep till he possessed Naboth's vineyard. Ambition harassed Aman's heart because he could not brook to see the despised Mordochai honoured by the whole court of Assuerius; and criminal love made the infamous Amnon sick and sad; and hence it should be a sufficient motive to crush a passion which we wish to satisfy to know that, whilst it maintains its stronghold, the heart can never enjoy repose. The love of luxury, of riches, of glory, pride of heart, curiosity, self-love, and all the other sinful pleasures produce their different conflicting motions in man, and thus render him unhappy; and he continues so as long as he is in search of his desires, and when he finds the gratification of them he is always in fear of losing them; and should he lose them, he is plunged forthwith into anguish and deep despair of heart.

Where can we find remedies for those passions which make us so unhappy?

We can find them only in Jesus, who teaches us how to combat and surmount them. He proposes as a remedy against the love of pleasures the precept of penance, and labour, and mortification; to the love of riches He opposes detachment from this world, the spirit of poverty, and the renunciation of all we possess; to self-love and the love of creatures He opposes the love of God; and what is most comforting, He calls those happy who practise His remedies against those passions when He says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are those who weep; blessed are the meek, the patient, the persecuted, and the calumniated."[1] This is a paradox which the human spirit cannot comprehend, but which those know by experience who practise those remedies and maxims, and who neither love or desire anything but God and the accomplishment of His holy will. Why are people happy in the privation of the goods, the pleasures, and the profits of this world? Because Jesus substitutes for them other goods greater and more substantial. He gives grace and virtues in place of temporal riches; for the delights of the senses He gives internal joys and consolations from the Holy Ghost; for worldly glory He gives the hope of eternal joys; for the abnegation of creatures He gives the love of the Creator, which alone can satisfy and fill the soul. In this way Jesus not only heals the passions which make us unhappy, but He actually satisfies our inclinations.

How does our union with Christ satisfy our inclinations?

Our chief inclinations, says St. Augustine, are three—we do not

[1] Mathew, v. 3, 4, 5.

wish to die, we do not wish to be deceived, and we do not wish to be troubled; but in Jesus only we have peace, truth, and true life. 1st. The man who possesses Him has true life, because Christ Himself says: "I am the life; he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live."[1] "Everyone that believeth in me shall not die for ever."[2] 2nd. He has the truth, because Christ says: "I am the truth," the infallible truth; so that if we submit our reason entirely to Him, we never can be deceived. My senses are a constant cause of error to me—my reason is frequently seduced by my imagination, my passions, or by some one or other of my senses or faculties; but if I follow the light of Jesus, I can never be deceived. 3rd. The man united to Jesus has peace, because Christ says: "My peace I give you, my peace I leave to you."[3] He calms our troubles, our fears, and our inquietudes; and in Him we have everything—an omnipotent protector, a faithful friend, and an invincible defender.

It is true that we are subject to great miseries even though united to Jesus, because we have to fight against our passions and temptations, we have to suffer losses and bear afflictions, and we are in constant danger of losing our sovereign good; the flesh is opposed to the good we desire to perform, and the most solid piety is frequently persecuted by a world that derides it; and the soul is sorely afflicted over the uncertainty of its present condition, and whether the last sentence shall be eternal happiness or eternal misery. How can one be truly happy in the midst of so much pain and uncertainty as this, and hence we can well say that no man can enjoy perfect happiness on this earth. Our happiness commences in this world, because when united to Jesus we have everything calculated to console and comfort us; but in heaven only we can possess perfect happiness. A want of hope and confidence is the cause of all our troubles under earthly visitations and afflictions, and like the apostles, who imagined they were about to perish in the tempest, even though Christ was with them, we deserve, like them, to be reproached by our Redeemer for our little faith. If our faith and hope were not dormant, we would be comforted in spite of all our fears and uncertainties, because the Holy Ghost, who dwells in the heart of the faithful, hopeful Christian, says that we are the children of God. With what confidence should not religion inspire him who lives piously, since it teaches that he has, in the person of Christ, a God as victim of our alliance with God, and a mediator constantly reconciling us to His Father; a God as the propitiation for our sins, and always present before Him, as our

[1] John, xi. 25. [2] John, xi. 26. [3] John, xiv. 27.

high priest, making intercession for us; and a God as our Father, who loves us with an infinite love. What, therefore, has the just man to fear? It is not death, because he regards death as a blessing, as Jesus said that "He is his life." It cannot be judgment, because if charity do not banish this fear, it certainly should tranquillize it; and hence the just man may confidently address his God saying: "Thy kingdom come," and this is the way we can find our peace and happiness in Jesus Christ.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE HAPPINESS OF MAN.

O my Saviour and my God, I sought for happiness in vain when not united to you, and to continue to do so would be fatiguing to myself and fruitless to my soul, because when my soul does not possess God it wanders about from object to object, trying to satisfy herself, and yet she never can. There are some things which at first appearance seem agreeable to her, but soon she begins to weary. The pleasures of hearing have amused her for hours, and have never satisfied her; and although many other objects have given her a slight contentment, she abandoned them almost as soon as she began to enjoy them.

Alas, my Saviour, what could I expect but misery when separated from Him who is all goodness? I fatigue myself in vain by pursuing sensual goods and pleasures, because in so doing I become less happy and more criminal in finding happiness, by offending the God who has given me life to employ it in loving Him. No, my Lord Jesus, there is no happiness but in loving you; because you are the only happiness which my soul desires; because there is nothing in heaven or on earth to satisfy me but you; because you are the sovereign, the boundless, and infinite good, able to satisfy the endless longings of my soul and the measureless desires of my heart; and because you are greater than all things, and hence more than able to fill my heart. What can I desire which I do not find in you? If I desire worldly goods and pleasures, your grace is a far grander treasure, not subject to accidents of the future, and which, if I wish, I never can lose or destroy.

If I desire worldly grandeur, the fact of being your child, incorporated in your priesthood and attached to your royalty, elevates me more than all other dignities combined; and if I desire earthly delights, where can I find delights so full and overflowing as in your love? Although I sometimes feel that bodily evils overwhelm me,

that sadness and fear afflict me, and how a thousand conflicting motions harass my soul, still your grace comforts me, and the hope you have given me of a better life sustains me. The strong confidence I have in you tranquillizes all my troubles and uncertainties, because then I feel that you are with me, and defending me in the various battles I have to fight against the devil and my passions, and that consequently nothing is able to injure me. My God, deprive me of all my worldly goods, reduce me to extreme poverty, take away my good health, and fill me with infirmities, for all these are very little, are nothing, compared with the possession of you, who are my happiness and my salvation.

I never can be truly happy here below, because I cannot entirely and securely possess you. It is only in heaven I can rejoice, because it is only there I can fully possess you, and without the least fear of ever losing you. In heaven my soul will be entirely absorbed in you, because you will possess me and I will possess you, you will be my true life, my sanctity, my peace, my glory, and my happiness, and I will dwell for ever in you as in my natural element.

No principle of corruption shall exist in me there, because I will be incorruptible like you; there I will be happy comtemplating your happiness, living in your life, immortal in your eternity, holy in your sanctity, and unchanged in your immutability; there you will communicate yourself to me in an ineffable manner, causing my soul, filled already with your glory, to emit her sanctified beauties upon my body invested with immortality and incorruption. My adorable Jesus, all the desires of my heart shall incline to that end, and the postponement of this felicity shall be the constant subject of my sighs and tears. The hope of this great good should animate and encourage me to bear patiently all my sufferings, and the love of this great good should make me do your will, and to walk with courage in the narrow way which alone can conduct me to you. Amen.

CHAPTER III.

ON JESUS, THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

How are we to consider Jesus as the Mediator between God and man?

St. Paul tells us how, when he says in his epistle to Timothy: "There is one Mediator of God and man, the man Jesus Christ, who gave Himself up for the redemption of all."[1] What is a mediator? A mediator is a person appointed to establish union between persons at discord, to terminate their differences, and thus reconcile them; and hence St. Paul says: "A mediator is not one, but God is one,"[2] and cannot be in discord with Himself. Now faith teaches that man revolted against God by falling into sin and enlisting into the service of Satan, that God could not avoid feeling this insult against His majesty, and that hence a difference arose between them; and therefore it became necessary that some one should terminate this difference, and reconcile God to man. The Word, the only-begotten Son of God, presented Himself to His Father and desired to accomplish this grand work, and the Father consenting, sent Him into this world where He became man, and thus began the office of His mediation.

How has Jesus filled the office of Mediator?

He filled it to perfection, because he had all the qualities requisite for that office; because He was the only Mediator to keep in view the good and benefit of each party, and keep at heart their interests and finally reconcile and unite them together.

What qualities has Jesus for a Mediator between God and man?

St. Paul included them all in one text to the Colossians, which says: "Because in Him it hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself;"[3] and this fulness contains the plenitude of science, of wisdom, of justice, and of sanctity. He has the fulness of science in order to know all that God required—all His rights, all the necessities of man, and all the means to reconcile man. He received the plenitude of wisdom, in order to be able to apply with precision all the means which He knew were necessary to manage accurately all that concerned God and man in this reconciliation. He received

[1] 1 Epistle. ii. 5, 6. [2] Gal. iii. 20. [3] Col. i. 19, 20.

the plenitude of justice and sanctity, in order to avoid any defect or suspicion of partiality towards His Father or towards man. He received the plenitude of power, in order to be able to terminate a difference between God and His creatures. He had the plenitude of humility, of obedience, and of the merits of His sufferings; and as a further necessary qualification for His office, he had the plenitude of the divinity and the humanity, because to accomplish His grand designs He should be God as well as His Father, and man as well as we, and because our mediator should have combined in Him the grandeur of the divinity and the lowliness of man, in order to constitute for us a proper mediator and conciliator with His offended Father. He has done all this by uniting the divine and human nature in his own sacred person, and in this adorable union where Jesus is, and shall always be, God and man, our human nature is exalted to a participation of the divine nature. If Jesus remained as God alone, He could not be a Mediator, because He could not pray, or humble Himself, or suffer; and yet all these were necessary to satisfy the offended justice of His Father; and if He were a mere man, no matter how gifted and endowed, He never could be able to manage the reconciliation of man in a manner commensurate with the dignity of God; and hence St. Augustine said that between an immortal God and a mortal man there was a man-God to reconcile God with man.

Had Jesus as Mediator the interests of God and man at heart?

We said before that this was the second thing necessary for a mediator, and Jesus did this very thing, because as God He guarded the interests of His Father, and as man He guarded the interests of man, and this is the reason why we say that no other than Jesus could be Mediator of this alliance and reconciliation, because the Mediator should be both God and man, and being such should be able to manage the interests of both without fear, prejudice, or error. Jesus did all that, and no other could discharge it so well because no other person could love God and man as Jesus loved them. From this principle it follows that neither the angels nor man, however holy and perfect, could act as mediator for our reconciliation because they never could comprehend the entire interests of God, nor even those of man; and even though they could, they never would be able to manage them with a satisfactory precision, as there could be no proportion between God and the creature. God required a person of infinite merit to satisfy His offended justice; and as a man could not satisfy, it became necessary that a man should participate of infinite

merit, and thus satisfy; but as neither men nor angels could participate of infinite merit, since their powers and merits are finite and limited, it follows that Christ alone could be the only being able to satisfy His Father's offended justice, and the only one fit to be our mediator and reconciliator with God. Let us not be deceived; no man can return to God by means of the creature which made him God's enemy, because St. John says: "No one can go to the Father but through Jesus;"[1] and St. Paul says: "By Him we have access in one spirit to the Father."[2]

Has Jesus perfectly discharged all the functions of His mediatorship?

We have said before that the third qualification for a mediator should be to reconcile and unite the parties at discord, and Jesus has accomplished that reconciliaton, so absolutely necessary, between God and us, because He has adopted all the means to effect it.

1st. The adamantine wall between God's love and us was sin, and Jesus destroyed the old man of sin by nailing him to the cross, and by dying Himself on it as the victim of expiation and propitiation for our sins.

2nd. It was also necessary that the "old animosities," as St. Paul says, which existed between God and man should be extinguished, and Jesus did so, because He placed Himself between God and man in order to reconcile them. And what was the consequence of this merciful intervention? Alas! His Father struck Him down and humbled Him, and man put Him to death, and that death reconciled God to man who had offended Him.

3rd. But in order to reconcile God and man Jesus should pay His Father all He demanded from man, and that He would give to man all he could hope for from his God whom he had offended. God demanded that man should glorify and pay Him a worship proportionate to His dignity. His justice demanded that sin should be punished, and His mercy declared that the sinner should be pardoned, and Jesus accomplished all these. He glorified His Father by annihilating Himself and condescending to a union with our humanity—a union so necessary that without it a God would not be able to adore a God, nor to humble Himself before Him—a union so beneficial that God is infinitely glorified by it. Jesus has borne upon His body on the cross our sins, and all the outrages which mankind offered to His Father have fallen upon Him, and for all these crimes and injustices He has offered up His life, and conse-

[1] John, xiv. 4. [2] Ephes. ii. 18.

quently satisfied the justice of His Father. He has satisfied His Father's mercy by meriting the grace of reconciliation for the sinner with God, and with it the remission of his sins; and hence St. Paul says to the Colossians that He "blotted out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us, and He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross."[1] Holy David foretold that mercy and truth would meet each other through this Divine Mediator; and they did meet, have been manifested, and have joined in holy accord in Him. Justice demanded that sin should be punished; and it has been in Jesus, who was loaded with our iniquities, and as mercy demanded pardon He obtained it for us.

Has Jesus, as Mediator, procured all that man hoped for?

Jesus obtained, by His sufferings and prayers, the pardon and mercy sinful and criminal man demanded and hoped for, and He gave a means to man to satisfy God when He gave the superabundant merits of His passion and death, His blood, His mysteries, His sacrifice, His spirit, His cross, and His sacraments. He furthermore enriched man by uniting Himself to our nature, and thus enabling man to make use of Him for his sanctification and salvation, and He did all this in a manner worthy of His dignity and grandeur. The moment a man is united to Jesus, he is placed that instant in a position to adore God by the application of His Son's merits, by the effusion of the Spirit, and by grace; because whilst in that position it is not the man who acts, who suffers, and satisfies, but Jesus, who dwells in him by His grace. By means of this grace the man is able to act, to suffer, to pray, and to do penance; and hence we can say that the meritorious acts of a man united to Christ do not belong so much to him as to Jesus, because it was Christ that established the means, and gave man the grace to elicit and perform these meritorious acts, and therefore we can truly add that God accepts the tears, the penances, and the other Christian works of man, not because they are done by him alone, but because they are done by and with Jesus, the only Mediator between God and man; and hence St. Paul says: "We were some time afar off, and now we are made nigh by the blood of Christ."[2]

What conclusions are we to draw from the foregoing truths?

That we should not put any glory in our own works, but in Jesus, by whom and in whom we live, merit, and act, and that all the fruits of our penances acquire their power and value from Jesus, because He offers them up to His Father; and because He is the Son of that

[1] Coloss. ii. 14. [2] Ephes. ii. 13.

Father, they are accepted. This is what the Council of Trent wishes to convey when it tells us to regard Jesus as the Chief, who communicates spirit and life to all His members, and who enriches all they do in order to present them to His Father. But in order to be reconciled to God, it will not suffice to detest sin and believe in Jesus Christ, because the Sacred Scriptures, the apostolic writings, and tradition tell us to be converted to God with our whole heart in fasting and tears, to redeem our sins with alms, to do penance in sackcloth and ashes, to bring forth fruits worthy of penance, to crucify our flesh, to make our members, which were before servants of iniquity, now and for evermore obedient to justice, and to offer our bodies to God as so many living, holy, and agreeable sacrifices. "Do not forget," says St. Paul to the Hebrews, "to do good and to impart, for by such sacrifices God's favour is obtained."[1] It is clear from this language that if we wish to receive grace and the remission of our sins, it will not suffice to believe that Christ is our Mediator and suffered for us, but we must believe in the necessity of penances and good works, and that they are agreeable to God through Jesus Christ.

Does Jesus fill and discharge the office of Mediator now in heaven?

He does, and will continue to do so through eternity, and although He does not suffer for us, and never shall, still He continues His mediation by constantly offering up to His Father all He did and suffered here on earth; and this mediation procures boundless benefits for us. 1st. Alas! this earth is overrun with the crimes of men, and if this divine Mediator had not interposed and held back the vengeance of His angered Father, it would have fallen long since upon guilty and ungrateful man. Iniquity so abounds in all the kingdoms, provinces, cities, towns, and villages of this world, and even in almost every family, that a perfectly good man can hardly be found amongst them. Blasphemy, injustice, and avarice, imposition, cruelty, and vengeance are broadcast upon this earth; assassination, adultery, and all kinds of abominations and impurities are in the ascendant; the sacraments are profaned and holy things trampled under foot; truth is ignored and the gospel despised and misrepresented by false systems; pious persons are reviled by worldlings, and the Church harassed and persecuted by many different sects and heresies; and all these terrible abominations are daily crying up to heaven for vengeance. All the attributes of God, His

[1] Heb. xiii. 16.

power, His justice, His sanctity, and even good and holy people, are calling on Him to tear up those foul weeds from the vineyard of the Church; and the souls of those lost by the malice of impiety demand that these crimes be punished, and all sinners crushed and destroyed without mercy. When the anger of the living God is threatening to burst forth, and the heavens are clouded with His vengeance, He sees our merciful Mediator, that heavenly rainbow figured by our terrestrial ark, that mark of alliance with mankind; and seeing Him He remembers the league, and suspends His vengeance to give man time to do penance, and thus to pay the debt due to His offended justice.

2nd. Through this Mediator we have access to God by faith in His blood, through Him we obtain pardon for our sins, and through Him we pray, and our prayers are heard. He teaches us how to walk in the way that conducts to God, and how to perform works of justice, and He gives us a knowledge of God and a heart to love Him.

3rd. Through this divine Mediator we are united to God by a most substantial union, the incarnation, where the human and divine natures are united in the same person, and through Him we are united to God by a union of grace through the spirit and blood of Jesus, which is the blood of the new and eternal alliance made by this new Mediator with us.

When the Church teaches that there is but one Mediator between God and us, does she not teach a different doctrine elsewhere touching the invocation of the saints?

The practice of praying to the Mother of God and to the other saints in heaven to intercede for us is a most holy and useful custom, and faith teaches that we do not dishonour Jesus, our Mediator, by invoking and praying to the saints who are our friends, the friends of God, and members of the mystic body of Christ with us, to aid and help us by their intercession. How could it be wrong to ask our brothers who are perfected in the union of God, who see all in Him, who know our wants and the dangers to which we are exposed, and who have a perfect charity for us—how, I say, could it be wrong for them to help to save those for whom Christ shed His blood? The Church never taught that the practice of praying to the saints in heaven was contrary to our belief in a single Mediator; but, on the contrary, she always taught and confirmed the good of this holy practice. She teaches us to believe that the saints can obtain nothing for us from God except through our only Mediator, Jesus Christ. It is

certain that the saints can aid and help us; and as they can, would not we, unfortunate sinners, be very negligent of our best interests if we did not ask those friends of God and members of His household to obtain grace for us to conquer our spiritual enemies, and thus help us to secure our salvation? When a criminal wants to get pardon from a prince he has offended, he asks all those whom he knows to have influence at court to help him; he employs all the courtiers he can, and all whom he believes to have free access to his offended king, to aid in securing his pardon. So, too, when we offend God we employ all the the influence we can in the court of heaven to obtain, through Jesus, pardon from God. The Church adopts this holy practice here on earth, the faithful do the same with each other, and the apostles not only preached and authorized it, but they always practised it; and hence prayers to the saints cannot be opposed to our faith in a single Mediator.

What resolutions should these truths induce us to make?

We should resolve to become reconciled to God, and never again to offend Him by our crimes and worldly lives; we should place all our concerns in the keeping of this divine Mediator, because He loves us with an infinite love; and when the sight of our accumulated crimes alarms and casts us down, let us turn to Jesus who can make our peace, and who will be our conciliator and the consummator of that eternal alliance and union which we ought to make with God. When He ceases to be God and man, which is impossible, then we should cease to hope in Him; so, too, when He ceases to be the Mediator of our peace with His Father whom we have offended, which is equally impossible, then we should begin to expect no more mediation and no more mercy.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE ONLY MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

O Jesus, the only Mediator between God and man, I adore and thank you for all your mercies to sinful and ungrateful man. Where would we be now if you had not come to take up our defence, and to ward off the justly excited anger of your Father? It was not enough that you died to reconcile me to God, because I am always in need of your mediation, for I am almost constantly in sin. Hold back, dear Jesus, hold back the uplifted arm of your Father's offended justice, just ready to strike me if you do not interpose between it and me.

Never cease to make my peace with Him, give Him all His

demands on me, and enable me to give Him what His justice and immutable law demands from me, a sinner who desires his pardon. I have taken up arms against my sovereign, have trampled under foot all His ordinances and precepts, and by a remarkable treason I have joined the ranks of His enemies. But now, my dear Jesus, I deliver up those rebellious arms to you; and if you wish, my divine Mediator, turn them against myself, or destroy them so effectually that I can nevermore make use of them.

Behold these hands that laboured so long in the works of darkness, those eyes that have been employed in criminal observations, this tongue which I so often use in falsehood and vanity, this body and all its senses profaned by a thousand criminal deeds, and this heart and soul so frequently employed in the sinful love of creatures. All the senses of my body and all the faculties of my soul have used the arms of iniquity, and have been devoted to sin.

But I now deliver up to you, my dear Jesus, all those natural gifts, to consecrate and sanctify them to the glory of your Father. Unite my hands to them that I may be able to present them to Him pure and undefiled; unite my tongue to them that I may speak freely to Him, and publish the great amount of His benefits, and the extent of His mercy and charity to me; make my eyes a fountain of penitential tears, that I may weep away the disorders of my life; give me your spirit, that I may know God, His divine attributes, and all that I owe Him; and, my adorable Saviour, make me know you and your mysteries also, and the great blessings you have bestowed on mankind. Give me a heart like yours, that I may love you with the same love with which you loved me, because without you I can have no access to God. I see around His throne a splendour and majesty which frighten me, a sanctity which overwhelms me, and a justice which troubles and casts me down.

How can I approach Him without your mediation when I see everything in me calculated to make me despair. I am encouraged to advance when I reflect that I have a man-God as my Mediator. It is only through you, my Jesus, that your Father allows me to His feet, through you my penances are agreeable to Him, through you His mercy looks on me with a favourable eye, and His justice will not strike me in all the severity of its vengeance. Through you, my Jesus, He restored my lost innocence, He renews a friendship with me, and makes me partaker of His secrets. I know that there is nothing good in me, and everything to merit His anger, and I know that only for you I would never be able to obtain pardon of my sins

and a true reconciliation with my God. Destroy this wall of division which kept me so long separated from my God, and unite me to Him with an eternal alliance; be my peace, so that justice and mercy may embrace in me as they did in you. Finish in me the death of everything opposed to the spirit of God, and to the sanctity which He demands from me, and, better still, dwell in me, dear Jesus, that your Father may see me, receive me, and save me through you and in you. Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

ON JESUS, THE REDEEMER OF MAN.

Jesus is the Redeemer of man, and has been prefigured as such by the prophets. "Fear not," says Isaias, "thou worm of Jacob, you that are dead of Israel; I have helped thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer the holy one of Israel;"[1] and St. Paul, writing to the Colossians, says: "We have a redemption and remission of our sins through His blood;"[2] and holy David says: "With Him there is mercy and plentiful redemption, and that He will redeem Israel from all her iniquities."[3] We will consider in this chapter the redemption of man, and we will see from what a terrible servitude Jesus has delivered us, why He redeemed us, and the magnitude of the price paid for our redemption.

From what kind of servitude has Jesus delivered us?

He delivered us from the slavery of the devil, from the horrors of hell, and from the servitude of sin and of our passions; He delivered us from a darkness of spirit and a corruption of heart, from the captivity of the law, and the fear of death; and when time is no more, He will deliver us from all the miseries to which our souls and bodies were subjected.

How has Jesus delivered us from the slavery of the devil?

We must suppose that when man abandoned his legitimate master, God, for sin, he was delivered up to the snares of the devil as a punishment for them. The punishment of those who do not wish to obey God, and serve Him as the sovereign, is to separate themselves from Him by their crimes; and hence St. Paul says that they become subjected "to the powers of the air and of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief;"[4] and it is thus that God punished man by abandoning him to the demons who made him their slave; and this was the slavery figured by the Jewish bondage under

[1] Isaias, xli. 14. [2] Coloss. i. 14. [3] Psalms, cxxix. 7, 8. [4] Ephes. ii. 2.

Pharaoh. This impious king, says St. Augustine, treated his poor people with extreme severity, making them workers of clay, hewers of wood, and drawers of water; and this sad picture is a figure of the subjugation of those who abandoned God for sin. This tyrant, the devil, treats man as his slave, and with the most terrible severity; and unfortunate man makes only works of clay and devotes himself entirely to earthly occupations. When God deigned to deliver the Israelites, He sent Moses, His servant, as His vicegerent to do so. He placed a miraculous wand in his hand, and commanded him to go and deliver his people from their captivity. He empowered him to work most astounding miracles, and, in a certain sense, to revolutionise the whole order of nature. It was not through those shining miracles that the Israelites were to be delivered from their captivity, but rather by the blood of the paschal lamb placed upon their doorposts in the form of a cross, all of which was a figure of Jesus, the true paschal lamb who was to deliver us by His passion and death from the captivity of the devil. God conquered, through Moses, the proud and haughty spirit of Pharaoh, and buried him and his host of warriors in the waters of the Red Sea, and the blood of Jesus applied to us in baptism saved us from the slavery of the devil, and it was for that end that He, our great and powerful God, came into this world. He conquered the well-armed enemy, and stripped him of his power, and in doing so gave us true liberty. As David conquered Goliah, who appeared invincible to the Israelites, so Christ, the Son of David, conquered the devil figured by Goliah. He conquered him not with a missive from the sling, but with the weakness of the cross, and with weapons apparently most humble and powerless; and hence St. Paul says to the Colossians: "He delivered us from the powers of darkness and translated us into His kingdom."[1]

How has Jesus delivered us from eternal horrors?

When man had sinned He not only became subject to the devil, but He deserved everlasting punishment as well, and if God pleased He could have inflicted it upon Him without any injustice, but He gave us His Son, who suffered and died, and thus paid the price of our redemption from hell.

How did Jesus deliver us from the slavery of sin and of our passions?

"Whosoever," says our Saviour, "commiteth sin is the slave of sin;"[2] therefore when sin and our passions rule us they enslave our heart and soul. He delivered our souls from darkness, and en-

[1] Coloss. i. 13. [2] John, viii. 34.

lighteneth them with His truths; because He says, in St. John: "You shall know the truth, and it shall make you free."[1] He delivered our hearts from inordinate self-love, and the love of creatures as well, by infusing His grace and charity into them through the Holy Ghost; and hence St. Paul says: "The law of the Spirit of Life in Jesus Christ hath delivered me from the law of sin and death."[2] The spirit of the Lord becomes master of our spirit and of our hearts, by banishing from them the spirit of the world, and by subjugating our passions to the action of grace; and hence St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there also is the spirit of liberty."[3]

How has Jesus delivered us from the servitude of the law?

St. Paul and St. Augustine teach that the ancient law, figured by the children of Agar, the bondswoman, made only slaves; but Jesus came to deliver us from this law of fear, a law burthened with so many ceremonies and precepts, in order to make us subjects of the new law of charity, which makes us children of adoption, and whose entire code of precepts is contained in the single one of charity. St. Paul points out all this to us in his Epistle to the Galatians, where he says: "And when the fulness of time was come God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons;"[4] and the spirit of Christ operates this adoption in us, makes us love God as our Father, and to observe without fear all His divine precepts.

How has Jesus delivered us from the fear of death?

St. Paul tells us when he says that "Jesus partook of our nature in order that through His death He would destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil; and might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to servitude."[5] Death is generally a matter of fear to those in crime, but it is not so to those whose lives are conformable to the Gospel of Christ. Jesus has taken away the horrors of death by His death, and made us, through grace, to regard it as an advantage, because it procures countless blessings for us, and delivers us from all the dangers which expose us during life to continual fears and alarms. He saves us from the fear of death by creating within us a boundless confidence in His mercy, and consequently the strong hope of a better life, and he makes us regard it as a homage which the creature

[1] John, viii. 32. [2] Rom. viii. 2. [3] 2 Cor. iii. 17.
[4] Gal. iv. 4, 5. [5] Heb. ii. 14, 15.

should render to his Creator, as a sacrifice to honour his supreme and immortal sovereign, to satisfy His justice, and to consummate the work of His sanctification.

When shall our redemption be perfect and fully accomplished?

Properly speaking, it will be only at the end of time, because the elect will only then be delivered from their spiritual and corporal enemies, because during life they are subjected, in spite of them, to the assaults of concupiscence and to the miseries of the body, and because when they feel the weight and corruption of them they cry out, in the language of St. Paul, "Unhappy me, who will deliver me from the body of this death."[1] We who have received "the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God—the redemption of our body;"[2] but the Lord will say to them on the last day: "Lift up your eyes, for your redemption is near." On that day they shall be entirely exempt from their infirmities; they shall never again feel the least attack of concupiscence; their bodies shall come forth from the tomb invested with glory and incorruption; and they will be delivered from the darkness and seductions of the spirit, from the temptations of the devil, from the revolts of the flesh against the spirit, and from the fear of death and judgment. On that day truth shall cease to be held captive by the injustice of man, and all creatures shall be delivered from the slavery of that corruption to which the vanities and other passions of men had subjected them. These are the slaveries from which Jesus delivered us, and such is the price he has paid for our redemption.

What did Christ pay for our redemption?

St. Peter, prince of the apostles, tells us when he says: "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as gold or silver, from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled."[3] A single one of His sufferings is more valuable than the combined treasures of this world, and yet nothing less than the life and blood of a man-God would suffice to pay the ransom due by our souls to God's offended justice; and to further mark the enormity of sin and the extent of His love for us, He cheerfully immolated both, to show us the incomprehensible antagonism there is between sin and His love for man. What do we find in the cross? We find the length, the breadth, the height, and the depth of our Redeemer's love for man; and we should find all these in the enormity of sin as well, and

[1] Rom. vii. 24. [2] Rom. viii. 23. [3] 1 Ep. i. 18, 19.

yet we cannot, because God alone can comprehend and measure the boundless malice of it.

Has not God given His blood to redeem our sins in general, and has He not suffered for our sins in particular ?

It is the opinion of many of the fathers of the Church that every one of our sins deserves a punishment peculiar to itself, and the Church wishes that confessors would remember this in the imposition of penance; and hence we can say that when Jesus prayed and satisfied for our sins, He did so for all sins in general, and for all sins in particular as well. He wished to endure some pain peculiar and proportioned to each, and hence when He was born in poverty, and lived and died in extreme want, He desired to satisfy for our avarice, and for the too great love we have for the goods and riches of this world. He suffered affliction of soul, and was overwhelmed with a mortal sadness, to expiate the vain joys of this world and the false pleasures found in sin. He was betrayed to repair our perfidies and ingratitude. He was bound as a criminal to loosen the chains of our bad habits, and He was covered with opprobrium and humiliation to satisfy for our pride. To expiate our ambition He accepted the last place, and was treated as the last of mankind. He was crowned with thorns to atone for our vanities. He was invested with a purple robe of derision to repair our great luxuries and extravagant expenditure. He was struck on the face and spat upon, to repair that vain care we bestow on the decoration of our bodies. He permitted His body to be cut and wounded with lashes to expiate the inordinate love we have for our bodies. He suffered thirst and drank vinegar and gall to repair our excesses in eating and drinking, and to heal the criminal pleasures to which we abandon ourselves. By His patience and meekness under afflictions, He wished to expiate our tempestuous passions, our stormy anger, and our threats of vengeance. His hands were pierced with rough nails to repair the criminal deeds done with ours. He was placed in the company of thieves and abandoned men to satisfy for our thefts, our frauds, and our robberies; and, at last, He died for His enemies to wipe away our hatreds, our ill-will, and our homicides, and to establish us in charity and re-unite us to Himself; and therefore it is true that though Jesus died for sin in general, each of them gave Him a wound which caused Him to suffer pain for it.

What had Jesus in view by paying a superabundant price for our redemption ?

1st. St. Paul tells us when he says to the Corinthians: "You do not belong to yourselves, for you are purchased at a great price."[1]

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 20.

No creature is so vain and presumptuous as man, because he believes that he is entirely master of himself and independent of all others; he imagines that he has a right to dispose of his desires, his actions, and all he possesses just as he pleases; but he is deceived, because he belongs to God by creation, and in a far more perfect and intimate manner by redemption. He spoke only a few words to create us, but to redeem us He spent thirty-three years in poverty and sufferings, and then He died to become master of all we have and are; and hence it cost Him much more to redeem than to create us, and, therefore, instead of belonging entirely to ourselves, we are the purchased slaves of Jesus, and cannot dispose of anything we possess without His consent. We cannot dispose of our intellect or our will, of our bodies or our actions, of our person, our goods, our vocation, or anything we have or expect to have, but in accordance with the wishes of Him who redeemed us, so as to make us all His, and for Him; and hence St. Paul said that "He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works."[1] We were purchased, not to live in a false liberty or according to our desires, but as entirely consecrated to the service of our Redeemer, because the liberty of the children of God consists in being disengaged from the servitude of the devil and our passions, and wholly subjugated to God by love.

2nd. Jesus had another design in view in purchasing us at so high a price, and this was to make us understand the value of our immortal souls. The value of a single soul is inconceivably greater than the whole created world, because it bears upon it the impress and likeness of the Deity, and because its desires are so boundless that nothing but an infinite good can satisfy it. Nothing that man could say or make known to us could better explain the excellence of a soul than the fact that Jesus gave His life to redeem it. And, oh, what a misfortune and injustice to God to barter this soul for a momentary pleasure, and thus sell it to our mortal enemy, the devil, for a paltry sum. Surely, we are not making too strong a case when we say that some men take more care of a domestic animal, and even of the least valuable thing belonging to them, than of their immortal soul, purchased with the life and blood of Jesus. We can always comprehend the value of our soul by considering what He has given to redeem it, and by comparing its excellence and grandeur with the vile and useless nothings which the devil and the world promise for its subjugation.

3rd. Jesus redeemed us in order, says St. Luke, that "being

[1] Titus, ii. 14.

delivered from the hands of our enemies, we would be able to serve Him without fear, walking in His presence in sanctity and justice all the days of our lives." Therefore, we should show Him some mark of our gratitude by striving to serve Him in a manner worthy of this grand benefit of redemption; and that we would so occupy ourselves, He delivered us from our enemies. It is our duty to manifest, by the sanctity of our lives, that we belong entirely to Jesus who redeemed us, and that we shall nevermore live for this world, but only for Him who died for us. It is our duty likewise to serve Him, not as slaves who serve through fear, nor to appear just and holy in the eyes of men, but as we became his adopted children through the mystery of the Incarnation, we may live in such true justice and sanctity as to become saints in the sight of God, always disposed to do His will, and to act in all things only with a view to please Him.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE REDEEMER OF MAN.

I adore you, my God and my Redeemer, who came upon this earth to deliver me from the captivity and slavery of the devil to whom I sold myself by my crimes. Alas, my dear Lord, the more I reflect upon this servitude, the more clearly do I comprehend my injustice, my shamelessness, and my hardness of heart against you. What a terrible injustice to abandon my legitimate God, and deliver myself up to the devil. What an injustice to prefer an enemy who has no right or claim to me, to my God, my Father, and my Creator, who has sovereign dominion over all my being.

What an injustice to sell myself for a mere nothing, and thus forfeit the grand blessing which my God has promised to me. This slavery could not be less shameful than it is unjust, because nothing could be more shameful in a man, born to the likeness of God, than to descend, like the Prodigal, to herd swine and commit acts dishonourable and unbecoming a Christian. This slavery is hard and insupportable, because a man cannot serve the devil and carry his yoke unless with great pain, labour, and difficulty. But you, dear Lord, have had compassion on us, for you have given your life and blood to deliver us from this unhappy tyranny. I now belong to you alone, who purchased me at so great a price, and hence I am your slave, to serve you and to live with you for ever. Engrave the new law of charity upon my soul—that law which makes me your freedman by making me your slave.

My Lord, you know what a shameful tissue of crime my life has

been before I accepted the blessed liberty which you gave me; and yet, alas! there are some things which hold me still a captive. Finish, my dear Lord, finish by the power of your grace the destruction of those bonds which still enchain my soul and detain her in captivity. Dear Lord, when can I say with holy David: "You have broken all my bonds, and I will sacrifice to Thee the sacrifice of praise;"[1] and when shall I be in our mother, the Jerusalem on high, where her children enjoy true liberty? O Lord, permit my afflicted heart to exclaim with St. Paul: "Unhappy that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?"[2] this body which stupifies my soul and holds her captive and enchained in a hard prison, where she enjoys scarcely any liberty to work out her salvation as she longs to do.

Break, dear Lord, all these unhallowed bonds, and apply to my soul the fruits of redemption, for I tremble when I remember that I can still become the slave of the devil, and thus lose the great benefits of redemption. O Lord, never again permit me to sell my soul to this infernal tyrant. What could he promise me equal to those great blessings which you have promised to give to those who serve you? I shall run without ceasing after those priceless blessings, and up to the last moment of my life I will cry out, I desire to be delivered from the bonds of my body, and to be with you in heaven, where I shall rejoice in perfect peace and liberty for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER V.

ON JESUS, THE ARCHITECT OF THE HOUSE AND TEMPLE OF GOD.

THE Church of Christ is sometimes compared to a great edifice, sometimes to a city situated on a mountain, sometimes to a house which God had built, and sometimes to a temple in which each member of the elect is one of those "living stones constructing the spiritual edifice of that spiritual house"[3] mentioned by St. Peter, in which God wishes to be eternally adored. Jesus, the architect of this city, this house or temple, which he raised to the glory of His Father, and which the prophet Zacharias foretold when he said: "Behold the Man, the Orient is His name; He shall build a temple to the Lord, and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne."[4]

Can this prophecy be applied to Jesus?

[1] Psalms, cxv. 16, 17. [2] Rom. vii. 24. [3] 1 Ep. ii. 5. [4] Zach. vi. 12, 13.

Although it applies directly to Zorobabel, who built the temple of Jerusalem after the captivity, still the holy fathers regard it as applying to Christ, whom the prophet Malachy calls the *Sun of Justice* which is risen over us, and whom Zachary, father of St. John the Baptist, calls the Rising Sun come already to visit us, and whom God has sent upon this earth to enlighten us and to build up the spiritual temple in which He wishes to be eternally adored. Therefore, let us consider Jesus, the architect of this grand edifice; let us admire the wisdom with which it is constructed; who are the stones He has employed in its construction; what is its beauty, its grandeur and magnificence; who are the workmen He has associated with Himself to finish this sublime work, and at what time it will be completed and perfected. All these points require some particular consideration.

How has Jesus acted to erect this grand edifice?

He proceeded with the most admirable wisdom, because He first formed the design of it with His Father, and had seen in what should consist the beauty, the grandeur, the magnificence, and the proportions it should have to be worthy of the Supreme Being and the intentions He had in view. He had seen what should be the strength of the holy city He was about to build; what sort should be its citizens, and the laws and ordinances He should establish in it. He had seen also what kind this house ought to be in which He was to be the chief, that is, the Father of the entire family; what sort the family should be, and what order it was necessary to have established in it. He knew how holy this temple of the living God ought to be, of which He was to be the priest, the victim, and the foundation. He saw all the materials for every portion of this temple—for the sanctuary, the walls, the floors, and its entire decoration—and He saw what qualities the priests should have whom He intended to employ in His edifice. We never fail to admire the wisdom displayed by Solomon in the construction of the temple planned for him by his father David, and we praise the beautiful order which he established amongst the countless workmen employed in it; but we must admire Jesus much more, as Solomon was only a mere figure of Him, and because Solomon's temple was a figure of that which Jesus was to raise afterwards to the glory of His Father.

How did Jesus execute the plan which He formed of this holy edifice?

He has chosen, and still continues choosing, the select stones

which He considers necessary to complete the designs He has in view. He takes some of those stones off the highway, and some from the mountains and forests; He digs some from deep quarries, and chisels and fashions them until they are fit for the positions He has destined for them. Those which He takes from the forests, the highway, and the deep quarries, signify those Jews, Gentiles, and heretics whom Jesus converted to the faith, and, in a general sense, they signify all those sinners who have returned to God, and persevere in justice and sanctity; and this is what St. Paul alludes to in his Epistle to the Ephesians, where he says: "In whom you also are built together into a habitation of God in the Spirit."[1] This edifice was figured by the materials used in the erection of Solomon's temple, some of which were supplied by the King of Tyre, and some were taken from Judea by order of Solomon himself; and this union of Tyrians—who were Gentiles—with the Jews, figures to us that both equally entered into the constitution of this edifice, and that when all were united together they formed but one temple, Christ—the corner-stone uniting the two walls of the building.

How does Jesus prepare the stones which he destines for the construction of this spiritual temple?

He prepares them by separating them from the world, and thus rescues them from their errors and from the pursuit of their passions. He detaches them from the things here on earth and from every sin which made them objects of disgust to God, and which, as a consequence, made them like unchiseled rocks, unfit for any place in the edifice. Baptism withdraws them from the servitude of the devil, and makes them precious and befitting stones for the building, and penance shapes them by the different mortifications it imposes on them. All the afflictions, sufferings, humiliations, persecutions, bad treatment, and, in a word, all the trials and crosses which God is pleased to send upon us, provided we bear them with patience and resignation to His holy will, are so many strokes of the hammer, so many cuts from the chisel, with which Jesus prepares the stones which he intends to place in his temple. Tyrants and all those who persecute the Church and her members are the chisel and hammer which God uses to form the stones, and give them the necessary shape and proportion for the place intended for them in the temple of Christ. This divine architect rejects those stones unfitted to be models, that is, He rejects those Christians unwilling to suffer, and He rejects those who murmur and blaspheme Him under humiliations

[1] Ephes. ii. 22.

and afflictions as so many stones broken and misshapen by the hammer, because it is only through many tribulations that we can enter into the kingdom of heaven, and Christ must prove our faith in Him, in order to prepare us for His kingdom as His Father prepared it for Him.

How are we to become living stones of this holy edifice?

We must make ourselves absolutely dependent on Jesus, and permit him without murmur or complaint to shape and chisel us just as he pleases. We must allow ourselves to be placed without the least resistance in that part of the edifice which Jesus thinks proper, and never to ambition any other position than that which the master of the building wishes to give us; and once that Jesus has fixed our position in His temple we should remain there in peace, never envying or desiring the place of another. Each one should be content with the place he has received in the building, whether it be in the sanctuary, on the floor, in the walls, in a hidden place, or one exposed to the world, because it should be enough to make us content that the architect placed us there.

What constitutes the beauty and the grandeur of this magnificent temple?

The grandeur of this temple does not consist of golden or silver ornaments, such as the temple built by Solomon did—1st. Because all its beauty is its foundation, Jesus Christ, and, as St. Peter says, its "chief corner-stone,"[1] "in whom," says St. Paul, "all the building being framed together groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together into a habitation of God in the Spirit."[2] The whole Church is built upon this foundation, and from it she receives all her beauty. The apostles are not only the foundation, but the pillars as well of this grand edifice, and this Church has been established on the doctrine of Christ which they preached, and on it she has extended all over the world.

2nd. Another feature in connection with the beauty of this edifice is the cement uniting all its living stones, and this cement is no other than the faith, the hope, and the charity uniting all those living stones to Jesus, their architect, and which binds them together in a manner so divine as to form only one temple, the beauty and magnificence of which are worthy of the God in whose honour it has been erected.

3rd. But what further develops the beauty of this holy place is the adorable blood of Jesus, and that of the more than eighteen

[1] 1 Ep. ii. 6. [2] Ephes. ii. 21, 22.

millions of martyrs with which it has been watered. Add to these the purity of the virgins, the innocence and the sanctity of so many just, the prayers, the sighs, the labours, and the tears of so many illustrious penitents who flooded its pavements where their souls lay prostrated; the poverty and the mortifications of so many religious; the silence and retirement of so many pious anchorites; the charity, the zeal, and the solicitude of all those who gloried to minister to the poor; and, finally, all the various virtues pouring their effulgent lights over those living stones, and giving glory to God, and to Him who placed them in the holy temple; and yet all are combined to make only one grand and visible whole of their numerous and brilliant beauties.

Is there not something else in this temple which makes its magnificence and beauty still more visible?

There are many more beauties besides those mentioned, which develop and manifest the grandeurs and the glories of this holy temple—namely, the majesty of God who fills it, His wisdom which sustains it, the high priest who discharges his divine functions there, the adorable victim Jesus Christ offered up in it, and all the priests of the New Law whose sanctity and zeal shine with an ineffable brilliancy in this holy place, and whose various duties are so elevated and absorbing as to make us instantly comprehend the beauty and the grandeur of this heavenly temple.

Do we find any other beauties in this ever-glorious temple?

Yes, we see realized there all those blessings promised and figured in Solomon's temple, because we see there the true propitiatory, Jesus Christ, through whom God has spoken and still continues to speak to us, and by whom He was made propitious and favourable to us. We see there the ark of the alliance, the adorable body and blood of Jesus, which is the heavenly manna nourishing us in the desert of this life, and we see there also that Jesus is the sanctuary of the Divinity, the victim and the sacrifice continually offered up by the faithful to God. But what intensifies the magnificent splendour of this temple is, that everyone of the faithful, every living stone of this temple, is itself a temple, holy and consecrated to the Lord, because the Holy Ghost dwells in each of them, and the majesty of God fills them individually.

Has not Jesus other workmen associated with Him in the construction of His temple?

Jesus had no absolute necessity for any person in the formation of this grand edifice, because He could easily do all the work Himself; but He associated other workmen with Himself, to be, as St. Paul

says, His co-operators, and these are the faithful ministers of His gospel—those pastors, doctors, and preachers, whom He has filled with His spirit, that they may labour in the formation of His mystic body, and, as St. Paul says, "for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry,"[1] and according to the rules He prescribed and the designs He had modelled for them, and that they could not add or substract from the plan He gave them without His entire sanction. He says to His ministers what His Father said to Moses, whom He ordered to erect the tabernacle which was a figure of the spiritual temple Christ was to build: "Make all according to the model you have seen on the mountain."[2] And we can truly say that all who contribute to the conversion of sinners, and to the salvation of souls by their prayers, their good example, their alms, their instruction, and other good works, are at the same time living stones and labourers who carry materials to this divine Architect to finish the grand edifice He has erected.

How are we to understand that everyone of the faithful who leads a Christian life is himself a temple of which Christ is the architect?

Christians are the temples of God, because He dwells in them by the spirit of His presence, and hence St. Paul says: "Know you not that you are the temples of God, and that His spirit dwells in you;"[3] and again in the second Epistle to the Corinthians he says: "For you are the temples of the living God,"[4] and as God said in Leviticus: "I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people."[5] Therefore, what grace and sanctity must be in the Christian consecrated by the aspersion of the blood of Jesus and by the unction of the Holy Ghost; and this consecration is made by baptism, and by the prayers, the exorcisms, and the anointings used in its administration. The soul is consecrated after crime is expelled from it, then God comes to dwell in it, and Jesus begins to reside in it, as the priest who by His grace sacrifices the passions which rule there, and blesses and makes it just. He reigns there as a king upon his throne, scattering His benefits broadcast over it, and ruling it by the sweetness of His charity and the strength of His graces.

What sullies the beauty and disfigures the grandeur of this holy temple?

All kinds of sin, and particularly mortal sin; and the love of this world, avarice, impurity, ambition, and the other countless crimes of man, are the filthy idols which tarnish the beauty and dim the glories of this holy place. Oh, what a horrible profanation to place the devil

[1] Ephes. iv. 12. [2] Exod. xxv. 40. [3] 1 Cor. iii. 16. [4] 2 Cor. iv. 16. [5] Levit. xxvi. 12.

where Jesus used to dwell, since, as St. Paul says: "There can be no likeness or similarity between Christ and Belial, nor between the temple of God and the temple of idols."[1] What a sad sight to behold abominations in the holy place, and the court where Jesus used to reign the retreat of impure spirits; and hence St. Paul said: "If anyone will profane the temple of God, him will God destroy."[2]

What should one do who has unfortunately profaned the temple of God within him?

He ought to weep over the ruin of the holy temple he violated, he should exert himself to rebuild it with true penitential regret, and then banish from it all the idols of his passions, in order that Jesus can re-enter and abide there; but all this is accomplished after much labour and fatigue. All the Christian virtues should be employed in the construction of this edifice, as so many stones necessary for its completion. Solomon prepared all the materials for his temple before he began to erect it; so, too, should we do in order not to become the laughing-stock of worldlings, like those men mentioned by our Lord, who had to abandon the spiritual edifice they began because they had not previously made the necessary preparations. As Solomon placed large stones on the foundation of his material temple, so, too, we should have Jesus as the foundation of our spiritual edifice; for if we expect our piety to be solid and our repentance true, they must be founded on Him. As Solomon built his material temple in such great silence and tranquillity, that the sound of the hammer could scarcely be heard, so, too, we should labour in the construction of our spiritual edifice in peace and quiet, and with great vigilance and application. We should build our temple as the captive Israelites strove to build theirs, fighting the enemies opposed to us with one hand, and raising our edifice with the other, till we had it so far advanced to perfection as to be fit for a position in the everlasting temple with the elect who have consummated their union with Jesus Christ.

When will this grand edifice be finished, and what will be the beauty of that city and that holy temple?

It will be finished at the end of time, and then the gates and the foundations shall appear decorated with all kinds of precious stones, and everything in it will be pure, holy, and full of life and stability, and all shall be penetrated and encompassed with the glories of the living God Himself. The omnipotent Lord God and the Lamb will be the temple in which the elect will eternally adore them, and in

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 16. [2] 1 Cor. iii. 17.

which each of them shall be a living stone animated with the spirit of God, penetrated with glory, illumined with His light, burning in His love; and the Lamb will be the sun to light up this holy edifice, to enlighten the elect and to make known to them the marvellous wisdom and science of God in the formation of his elect. All in that temple will be holy and perfect, and Jesus, invested with immortality and glory, will be the priest, the victim, and the altar of eternal sacrifice; and He will be offered to God there, where nothing defiled can ever enter, nor anyone of those who committed abominations and lying, and died unforgiven; because those only shall dwell there who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and whose names are written in the book of life.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, ARCHITECT OF GOD'S HOUSE.

O my divine Saviour, how grand, how beautiful, and how holy is that temple which you erected to the glory of your Father; and why should it not be so, since your are its foundation and its corner-stone; you are its priest, its victim, and its altar; you are the creator of all its beauty, and you sanctified all the living stones comprising it.

I admire and adore your wisdom in the choice you made of the different stones you used in the construction of this holy edifice. I cannot help admiring your wisdom in the persons you used, and still use to shape the living stones of your holy temple—that is, when I see so many tyrants, heretics, and persecutors who have been, without their knowledge, the instruments which you employed to fashion the stones which you intended for your edifice. You have dispersed over this earth numerous evangelical labourers whom you associated with yourself in the ministry, to labour with you in the construction of this grand work; and happy are those who labour according to the model and the rules you have given to them, and not according to their own vain thoughts and desires.

Correct them, dear Lord, whenever they depart from the rules prescribed by you; guide their hands, their language, and their spirit, and give them a little of your wisdom, that they may be able to prepare properly the stones for your holy edifice. By baptism and the infallible faith you have given me, I became one of those living stones; but I am not so now, because I lost the sanctity of which you made me a participator, when I allowed the wickedness of this world to separate me from you. Ah! my dear Lord, this

terrible misfortune has happened to me, and I openly confess that I have been living as a stone from the sanctuary, without honour or glory, and cast away on the highways, straying about on the thoroughfares that lead to perdition; but when you saw my sad state you had pity on me, and by the effects of your gratuitous mercy you brought me back into the sanctuary of your temple. Finish to perfection, dear Lord, this work of charity which you began in me; you know, dear Redeemer, my many defects, and if I wish to be properly shaped it is just that I should feel the strokes of the hammer I so well deserve; and therefore, dear Lord, as I am only a rough stone, strike and shape me to that perfection which I ought to have for your edifice. Let your charitable hand fix me in the place you have destined for me, so that neither my own will, nor the influence of man, nor any human speculation can have any share in it, and through your help I shall remain peacefully, and without envy, in whatsoever place you may fix me.

I know how extremely unworthy I am to occupy a place in your sanctuary, and hence a corner on the floor of your temple, or a place in the interior of its walls, will suit me better than a prominent one; and there, dear Lord, I will wait in peace till you come to fix me in your eternal temple; for what use would it be to me to be a living stone for a time here on earth, if I be not one of honour and glory in your eternal sanctuary hereafter? O my beloved Saviour, I tremble when I think I have the power to separate myself from you by making a bad use of my liberty; but you will not allow this to happen, because you can keep me by your grace so firmly united to you that I can never again separate myself from you. My own inclinations draw me down to the earth, and if you do not sustain me by the power of your charity I shall infallibly fall; and if the abyss of your mercy do not rescue me, I shall fall into an abyss of miseries; but I trust in the power of your grace, the wonderful effects of which I felt so often before. Enable me, dear Lord, to discharge all my obligations with fidelity in the place you fixed me, in order that I may be one of those living stones which will, hereafter, form that eternal temple which is to be filled with the majesty and glory of your Father. But what do I say, dear Lord?

I should not only be a living stone of your house, but I ought to be a temple of the Divinity as well, and your apostle, St. Paul, called me so when he said: "This temple is holy, and he who will profane it, him will God destroy."[1] Ah! great Lord, how holy I ought to

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 17.

be since you came to dwell in me, as if in your own sanctuary, where you discharge the functions of priest and sacrificer by immolating and offering me up. Do not, dear Lord, permit your sanctuary to be profaned by any idol of avarice, pride, or impurity, and as I have been consecrated by your blood and by the presence of your holy spirit, grant that everything in me may breathe sanctity, piety, respect, silence, recollection, and eternal adoration: so that all in me may be worthy of your presence and of the grandeur of your name. Dwell in me, and grant that I may always dwell in you. Take possession of me and I shall surely possess you in time and eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER VI.

ON JESUS, PRIEST OF HIS CHURCH.

Religion teaches and even commands us to adore God, and to give Him a supreme worship by consecrating all we are and all we have to him. This is the reason why He wished from the beginning of the world that men would offer sacrifices to Him. When He gave His law He set apart the whole tribe of Levi to minister in His temple, and He selected those who were to perform the functions of the priesthood from amongst them, and all of them were a mere figure of Christ, who was to appear at the time foretold by the prophets, and who was to offer to God a victim worthy of His majesty and grandeur. He was the grand high priest and pontiff of the blessings to come, was figured by all the priests of the Old Law, and foretold by the prophets; and hence the Lord said: "I will raise me up a faithful priest, who shall do according to my heart and my soul, and I will build him a faithful house, and shall walk all days before my anointed."[1] St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, represents Him as such to us, and what he says of Him there can be reduced to two truths—namely, the sanctity and grandeur of the priesthood of Jesus, and the great advantages this priesthood procures for us.

In what does the sanctity and grandeur of Christ's priesthood consist?

We will find out what they are by considering His vocation, His consecration, His qualities, and the difference between Him and the priests of the Old Law.

1st. Jesus has been chosen by His Father from eternity to be

[1] 1 Kings, ii. 35.

the priest of His Church. He has not inducted Himself into this most supreme dignity, because St. Paul says that Christ did not glorify Himself that He might be made a high priest, but He that said unto Him: "Thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee."[1] "You are a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedech."[2] God saw the weakness and the impotence of the priests of the Old Law, and hence He sent His own Son, the figure of His substance, to be His priest. We must admire the wisdom of God, who designed and erected a temple so worthy of His sanctity, such as we described in the preceding chapter, and now we must adore that wisdom which had chosen a priest to correspond in every way with the sanctity and magnificence of that temple.

How could He find another so grand and holy as His own Son, Jesus? He had chosen Him when He took Him from His own bosom and said to Him: "Thou art my Son, and you shall be my priest." And when He showed Him the temple, in the erection of which the elect should be employed as so many living stones, and when He showed Him the hearts of the elect who were to be consecrated to Him as so many spiritual temples, it was then He said to His Son, I have chosen you to be the priest to bless and sanctify them. I wish, before you appear as God and Man in the world, to have priests there to typify you, and to predict your coming; and I wish, that through them, you will begin to perform your priestly functions, and if I favourably receive their sacrifices and offerings it will be because I see you in them. Christ, therefore, is that priest directly chosen by God, and in whose election and vocation neither faction nor passion had any part, such as the children of this world employ in their vocation; and although He is chosen to be such a priest, He is chosen to be poor, to weep, to labour, to suffer, and to die.

2nd. The consecration of Jesus, which was much more perfect than that of the priests of the old law, makes us better comprehend the sanctity of His priesthood, because the consecration of the priests of the Old Law was performed with material oil and the blood of animals, but Jesus was consecrated priest by the Most High God. First, He was consecrated by the plenitude of the Divinity, which resided substantially in Him, and which was personally united to His human nature; and secondly, by the plenitude of the Holy Ghost and His gifts, with which His humanity was perfectly filled. Holy David foretold all this when he said of Jesus: "Thou hast

[1] Heb. v. 5. [2] Psalms, cviii. 4.

loved justice and hated iniquity, therefore God—thy God—hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness,"[1] and hence Jesus received all the plenitude of the unction of the Holy Ghost, and all other priests receive it by participation only, and inasmuch as it is necessary for their priestly office. As the victim which Jesus was to offer up, and the functions which He was to exercise were more holy than those of the priests of the Old Law, it was necessary that He should be consecrated in a much more perfect manner, and hence he became a priest at the moment of His incarnation, and commenced from that instant to exercise the office of priest, and offered, as St. Paul says, His body to His Father.

By virtue of His consecration and His rank as priest, He has all authority in the temple of God, which is His church and house; therefore, He has the right to excommunicate and cut off from His body all those who live according to the spirit of the world, and to pardon and forgive the sins of those who sincerely repent for them. He is the depository of all the truths and all the designs which His Father had regarding His Church; He is the custodian of all mysteries and all graces, because He is the plenitude of them; and He has full dominion over all the blessings of the Church, because His Father gave them to Him. His Father taught Him what doctrines He should teach and preach to man, and from the plenitude of His unction all the bishops and priests of the New Law are consecrated to offer gifts and sacrifices for the people committed to their care.

What are the dignities of Jesus as priest?

St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, says: "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, and undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens,"[2] "who compassionates our infirmities, tempted in all things as we are, without sin."[3] 1st. It was befitting the excellence of the new alliance, and the great designs which God had in view for the salvation of man, that Christ should be holy and innocent, so as to fully please His Father and to satisfy for mankind, and this sanctity and innocence did not come to Him from a strange source, for they were natural, essential, and inseparable from His being.

2nd. He was separated from sinners, because He never participated in the corruption of human nature, and because He had not, and could not have, any part in the sins of man, even though He conversed and eat with them.

[1] Psalms, xliv. 8. [2] Heb. vii. 26. [3] Heb. iv. 15.

3rd. He was more exalted than the angels and the heavens, because as Son of God He was the creator of them all.

4th. He applied Himself in all things to the wants of His people through His great love for mankind, and because He had remedies in view for their evils, and hence for the sanctification of their souls, and this is why St. Paul said that—

5th. He was compassionate, and that His mercy was touched on account of your misfortunes, which caused Him to come near to us and to bring us relief.

6th. He has been faithful in every way in the house of God, because He was faithful in preserving His Father's rights, in accomplishing His designs, and executing His orders with all possible precision. These are the qualities of Jesus, and as such He should be, in our eyes, worthy of all love and respect, and we should pray to Him to grant similar characteristics to all who are associated with Him in His priesthood.

What are the differences between the priests of the Old Law and Jesus, the High Priest of the New Law?

The next thing we have to learn is the grandeur and the sublimity of Christ as priest, and how much more holy and perfect His priesthood is than the priests and priesthood of the Old Law. Make room, you priests of the Old Law; make way, you shadows and figures, for that priesthood which began to appear in the stable of Bethlehem; retire before that Priest of the New Law who goes to finish His sacrifice on the cross, and who goes to eclipse your pomp and glory by His poverty and His sufferings. Your priesthood is mortal, because you are mere men; but Jesus is a Priest and a God-man as well. You offered only rude and earthly victims to God; but, in the New Law, a God offers up, and a God is offered up. The priests of the Old Law were only for a time; but Jesus will be a priest for ever, because God has sworn so, and cannot retract His oath. The priests of the Old Law received their priesthood in succession, but Christ our priest succeeds no one, because He received His priesthood directly from His Father. The priest of the Old Law offered up sacrifices to purify themselves, but Christ had no need of this purification, because He was God impeccable, and sanctity itself. Christ offered Himself up for the sins of the people, not for a particular people, like the Jewish priests who always sacrificed for the people of Israel, but for the people of the whole world. The priests of the Old Law offered up a great number of victims of different kinds, which could not take away sin of any kind, but "Jesus

offered up only one sacrifice, and is now seated at the right hand of God for ever."[1]

The priests of the Old Law sacrificed only in one place, and this was in a material sanctuary which was to pass away in time; but Jesus offered sacrifice in many places. The first sanctuary in which Christ commenced to offer Himself up was the stainless womb of His Immaculate Mother Mary; then the day He was born in the stable at Bethlehem; and again when the Blessed Virgin went, as the law prescribed, to present Him in the temple at Jerusalem. He offered Himself as a victim to His Father every moment of His life, in the garden of Olives, on the cross where He expired with a loud cry, in heaven, and in the bosom of God into which He entered on Ascension Day. O august and eternal temple, which shall never be destroyed, and in which Jesus shall discharge the office of His priesthood for eternity. There he shall always offer His body and blood to His Father, together with His death, His labours, His sufferings, and His prayers for the salvation of mankind, and hence St. Paul says that "Jesus entered into heaven to present Himself before His Father for us."[2] He did not enter into the eternal sanctuary to offer the blood of goats and oxen as the high priest of the Old Law did once a year, but He entered with His own blood which He never ceases to offer to His Father for us, because He is never unmindful of us. The high priests of the Old Law entering once a year into the sanctuary of the temple, was the figure of Christ, the high priest of the New Law, who once entered into heaven with the blood of the victim lately shed for us, and with the names of the twelve tribes to present them before the Lord.

Jesus not only discharges His office of priest in heaven, but by an uninterrupted miracle of His omnipotence and love, He discharges it in our churches, where He offers up the same body and blood which He offered on the cross, and where He is as really present as at the right hand of His Father in heaven. He continues to offer on our altars the same body and blood which He immolated for us on the hill of Calvary, and which he daily perpetuates in our presence under the appearance of bread and wine. This sacrifice was prefigured by that of Melchisedech, who was a high priest, and who offered bread and wine; and hence we can understand the great differences between Jesus as priest and those of the Old Law.

In what way was Melchisedech a figure of Jesus?

He resembled the Son of God whose generation is eternal, and

[1] Heb. x. 12. [2] Heb. ix. 24.

who is a priest for ever, because he had no genealogy, since the beginning and the end of his life were unknown. He resembled Jesus because his name signifies king of justice, and Jesus is the essence of justice, and has become our justice and our peace. Melchisedech offered bread and wine to God, and Jesus on the eve of His death took bread and wine, and after He had changed them into His body and blood, offered them up to His eternal Father; and the priests of the New Law take bread and wine also, and by the words of consecration change them into the body and blood of Christ as well, and then offer them up on all Catholic altars to God. As Melchisedech offered up bread and wine to God after Abraham had returned victorious over the five kings, so, too, Jesus gives His body and blood—that bread which cometh down from heaven to those only who are victorious over the world, the devil, and the flesh, engaged in battle against them. As Melchisedech blessed Abraham in offering up the bread and wine, so Christ, in the sacrament of His body and blood, dispenses His graces and blessings to all the true children of Abraham, that is to all true imitators of His faith and disinterestedness.

What are the great advantages we receive from Jesus in His character of priest?

Before answering this question we must bear in mind that Jesus always had in view the glory of His Father and the salvation of man, and that as priest He was entirely devoted to His Father, and wholly occupied in our salvation. He is always in His temple offering up the adorable sacrifice of His humanity to His Father, preserving His rights, and defending His interests against all who would dare to usurp them. He is entirely devoted to the honour and glory of God, because He never ceases making Him known to the whole world; and He is wholly employed in the sanctification of man, because He never ceases filling him with His graces and benefits, even when he does not merit them. Admitting those facts, we can reduce the great benefits gained from Christ as priest to the following—1st. He blesses us. 2nd. He consecrates us. 3rd. He prays for us. 4th. He offers and sacrifices us to Himself. 5th. He makes us priests with Himself. 6th. He selects men and makes them participators and associates with Himself in the authority and functions of His priesthood. Now we shall explain in detail each of those points.

How does Jesus bless us?

God promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed in Him who was to spring from his race. We are cursed by God on account of our crimes, and our only merit is everlasting malediction; but

St. Paul assures us that "God hath blessed us through Christ with all spiritual blessings,"[1] and hence we receive from Christ not only temporal but spiritual and heavenly blessings in abundance. He blesses our souls when He enlightens them with the faith of the gospel; He blesses our hearts when He scatters His graces all over them, and causes them to love Him by filling them with His favours; He blesses our bodies when He makes them obedient to the soul, and thus prevents them from rebelling against the spirit; and He blesses our actions when He enables us to perform them for His love, and thus make them worthy of God; and this is the reason holy David says: "The Lord will give goodness to our earth, and it will yield fruit,"[2] and our souls shall be unfruitful also until God will give them His benediction. All the blessings which the Church gives her children represent those which Jesus gives us internally; and hence she marks everything she blesses with the sign of the cross, to teach us that we are all blessed through the merits of Christ crucified. Jesus blesses us in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist every time we assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and whenever we are present in His Church at any other devotion in honour of His adorable body; and hence we should regard Jesus on such solemn occasions as these as the priest who blesses us, and we should cast ourselves before Him as so much parched earth, requiring a celestial dew to moisten it, and thus produce fruits worthy of His grace and His spirit. Finally, Jesus will bless us on the last day, when He shall assemble His elect from the four corners of the world, and shall say to them: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, and possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning." On this day, too, He will bless the entire victim standing in His presence, and will take it into heaven and unite Himself eternally to it; and on the same day He will pronounce an everlasting malediction on the reprobate, because his life was as barren earth, producing only sinful fruits.

How does Jesus as priest consecrate us?

He communicates a consecration to us through the sacraments which infinitely exalts mankind. By baptism we become the temple of the living God, a temple where the Holy Ghost dwells, a temple consecrated by the blood of the Lamb without stain, and not by the blood of earthly victims. The Holy Ghost and his seven gifts, which we receive at confirmation, consecrate us to Jesus and to his holy religion, and enables us to confess on all occasions without a blush, and to proclaim everywhere with strength and courage that we are always

[1] Ephes. i. 3. [2] Psalms, lxxxiv. 13.

ready to sacrifice ourselves for his name. Penance consecrates us to God, by separating us from the world and from sin, and attaching us to God by a mortified body and a contrite and humble heart. Our body, our heart, and our soul are consecrated to God in the adorable Eucharist of the body, the soul, and the divinity of Jesus; and we become, in a certain sense, the body of Jesus itself, because this consecration does for our body and soul something like what the words of consecration do over the bread and wine on the altar. St. Cyril says that the bread and wine are only earthly matter before the consecration, but after the consecration they become the body and blood of Jesus, and are wholly and entirely divine. So, too, we were steeped in crime and members of Satan before our consecration, but after it we become through the sacraments, says St. Paul and St. Augustine, the members, and even the body of Jesus Christ. How wicked are those Christians who, after being consecrated to God in so many different ways, turn to profane practices, and deliver themselves up to the world and to all the allurements of their passions. We are consecrated to God not only by baptism, confirmation, penance, and the Eucharist, but by extreme unction, as so many victims who received the aspersion and await their immolation. By the sacrament of holy orders priests are taken from amongst men and consecrated to God, to discharge the functions of the ministry in all matters touching the worship of God and the salvation of His people; and by the sacrament of matrimony persons engaged in that state receive grace, and are consecrated to represent the union existing between Christ and His Church. Jesus as priest consecrates to Himself, and in a most special manner too, all those persons who make vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, because by their vow of poverty they consecrate all their worldly goods to God; by chastity they consecrate their body and soul to Him, in order to be His holy and unspotted spouse in both; and by obedience they consecrate their whole will to Him, in order never to have any will of their own, and no other than His and their superior's, who represents Him.

How does Jesus pray for us?

We have said before that the third good we receive from Jesus as priest is that He prays for us, and offers us unceasingly to His Father, and the gospel tells us that He often prayed for us while He was on earth. He had no need for prayer for Himself, but our wants always touched His most tender heart, and were present to Him in a most intimate and special manner in the garden of Olives and on the cross; and hence St. Peter says that "Jesus suffered once for us,

to present us to God."[1] We regard Jesus on the cross as only suffering for us, but on the altar we regard Him presenting us to His Father, present to Him, and praying and crying to Him in all the ardour of His love for us.

How does Jesus sacrifice us?

He sacrifices us during our entire lives by His word, which is the sword He brought upon this earth to separate us, Christians, by its power and efficacy from the things of this world, and from everything dear to us in it. It was this sword of the word of God that made Abraham obey God, and resolve to sacrifice his son Isaac, and it is this sword that separates sons from their fathers and daughters from their mothers, and even penetrates into the innermost recesses of the soul, to deprive it of everything calculated to seduce it or attach it to vain pleasures and amusements, and thus to make it die to everything worldly and selfish; and hence St. Paul says to the Hebrews, that "the word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than a two-edged sword, and reaching into the division of the soul and the spirit."[2]

Jesus sacrifices us also by the fire of that charity which he infuses into us through the Holy Ghost, and St. Paul says that it was this spirit that set on fire the sacrifice which Christ offered up on the cross, and which should be the fire of our sacrifice as well, and should consume by its presence and reduce to ashes everything earthly and carnal within us. This is the fire which Jesus came upon earth to enkindle, and which He wishes to see burning in the hearts of all men, and if we desire to see it burning in our hearts we must nourish and cherish it with all care and attention.

Jesus sacrifices us at the hour of death, by the power and sovereignty He has over us as our high priest and Lord of lords, and hence we must regard the maladies and afflictions which assail us as so many strokes which he inflicts upon the victim to prepare it for the final blow which it will receive at death, when it will expire under the all-charitable and omnipotent hand of this high priest, Jesus Christ.

How are we to understand that the grace we receive from Jesus can make us priests with Him?

We are made priests with Jesus because we become His members by baptism, and, being united to Him in the bonds of charity, we become one body with Him, and consequently participators in all His privileges; and hence St. John says in his apocalypse, "that Christ

[1] 1 Ep. iii. 18. [2] Heb. iv. 12.

loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, and hath made us priests to God, His Father."[1] He washed us in His blood by an effect of His love, to make us saints and worthy to perform the sacerdotal functions; and we, the faithful, are made priests, to offer up Jesus at the altar as often as we assist at the holy and tremendous sacrifice of the Mass; and hence we should take the adorable victim lying on the altar in the arms of our faith and charity, and offer Him to God with the priest who celebrates the holy mystery. We are priests also to offer up and sacrifice ourselves as Christ did to the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbour; and finally we are priests to offer spiritual sacrifices to God—that is, to offer up all our actions in connection with Him as our last end. O beloved Christians, what a number of sacrifices we have to make if we wish to live as we are bound. How many feelings and desires of the flesh we are bound to subdue, and hence we must always have the sword in hand, and hold the old man of sin upon the altar ready for immediate sacrifice, in order that the new man may live in us.

How are we to understand that the grace which we receive from Christ as priest, and which associates our mortal man with His immortality, is that which exalts us to the sublime distinction of priest?

Jesus, whose priesthood is eternal, desired to have a priesthood here on earth, to continue during all time the functions of that sublime and awful dignity. Oh, what office so grand as the priesthood, in which men are invested with the same authority and priesthood as Jesus, in which they represent Him and hold His place, and in which they are clothed in His identical priesthood. What an extraordinary being the priest must be while in the act of officiating at the altar! He does not speak in his own person, but in the person of Jesus Christ Himself; and the very moment he pronounces the words of consecration, Jesus is present that instant on the altar; the Son of God is incarnated, so to speak, in the priest's hands, and takes a new birth in the bosom of the Church; mankind has a victim and a priest on the altar, heaven has descended upon this earth, and God dwells amongst us. Oh, what dignities, what marvellous powers, what extraordinary graces Jesus bequeathed to the priests of His Church! He has given them power to absolve us from our sins, to teach us the true way to eternal life, to conduct us safely to heaven, to take our misfortunes upon them, to lift us up whenever we fall, to pray for us without ceasing, and to cheer and comfort us in our trials and afflictions.

[1] Apoc. i. 5, 6.

What obligations do we owe to Jesus as our priest?

St. Paul points out the two principal when he says to the Hebrews: "As we have a high priest over the Church of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with clean water."[1] Again, St. Paul recommends us to approach Jesus with great confidence when he says to the Hebrews: "Having, therefore, a great high priest who hath passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession, for we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin; let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may find mercy and grace in seasonable aid."[2] If we address such a pontiff as this with sincere hearts and full of confidence, He cannot refuse us any grace we want.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, OUR PRIEST.

I adore you, my Saviour Jesus Christ, High Priest of the New Law, because you have been consecrated by the plenitude of the Holy Ghost for this state, so holy and so exalted; you have discharged all the functions of your priesthood in a manner truly worthy of your Father; and as you consecrated and offered us to Him, do not cease, O holy and adorable High Priest, to offer me in particular to Him.

Bear me always in your hands, in order to present me to Him as a holy and living sacrifice, and elevate me above this earth, to which my corrupt nature always inclines me. I adore you in that eternal sanctuary you have entered in the tabernacle of your body. I adore you in the midst of your Church, where you fill the office of priest by blessing, purifying, consecrating, and offering us, with yourself, to your Father. I adore you in the midst of this world, which is the temple of the Divinity, and in which you act as priest by offering up all the creatures it contains.

Oh, how many blessings and graces do we not find and receive in your priesthood, since you made us priests with yourself at our baptism, by uniting us to you, in order to offer to you and to sacrifice to you all that we are and all that we have; and yet how few Christians regard themselves members of this royal priesthood. What more is this world than a multitude of people living as if in a temple of idols, where they sacrifice to vanity, to pleasure, to avarice, to

[1] Heb. x. 21, 22. [2] Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16.

ambition, to their riches, and to their friends, and where they often sacrifice faith and everything most sacred; and, finally, where the many make vanities their god and avarice their idol, and where impurity is followed by the majority.

This world is nothing less than a host of the priests of Baal, who immolate their sons and their daughters to Satan by allowing them to mix too freely in the world, and in dangerous companionships and profane amusements. What could be more revolting than to see Christians, whom Jesus has made participators in His priesthood, offering incense to the true God with one hand, and offering it with the other to some infamous creature; who come into our churches to sing or to hear canticles to the Lamb sung, and who go forthwith to sing the infamous songs of Babylon; who bend the knee before Jesus, and soon after prostrate themselves before the idol of their passions. Ah! my Lord Jesus, these crimes are not committed by Christians who wish to honour your priesthood.

Grant, dear Lord, that I may be for evermore amongst those who desire to honour your priesthood, and that I may never offer to idols the sacrifice and worship I owe to you alone. Come down from your high sanctuary, and be the priest of my soul and my body; bless them both with the plenitude of your spiritual benedictions; consecrate them to your service by the unction of your spirit; sanctify them by the infusion of your grace; offer them up to your Father and sacrifice them to the glory of His and your name. I respect the sword you hold in your hand to immolate your victim, and I honour the fire you hold in the other to consecrate it. Enter with this divine fire and sword into my heart as into your temple, and destroy there all the criminal passions which still infect it. Destroy my self-love, my concupiscence, and all those attachments I have still for this world and its visible creatures, and make me perform all those things which my indolence and apathy prevent me from accomplishing.

I see the victim I ought to immolate, but I have not the courage to give it the mortal wound. Consume with your celestial fire all that is earthly within me, in order that my heart may no longer burn with a strange fire, but that your love and spirit alone may be the fire of my sacrifice. Finish, dear Lord, my sacrifice and my immolation, for I wait in peace and accept with submission the blow which is to accomplish both. Behold me, a priest of the Most High; in your hands I am the victim on your altar, and I await you to accomplish all the merciful designs you intend for me. As you are a compas-

sionate pontiff have pity on me and forgive me all the sins I have committed against you; I present myself with confidence before the throne of your mercy to receive your forgiveness; I know that your throne should be an object of dread to such sinners as I am, and I would never dare to approach it if you did not command me to do so. All the surroundings of this seat of justice are well calculated to fill me with fear, particularly when I see there a king full of majesty and justice; but I know that I will find there also a priest full of sweetness and compassion, and hence I prostrate myself in profound humiliation of heart and soul at the foot this throne, and there I shall remain in peace expecting the pardon you, my Saviour, intended to grant me.

But, dear Lord, I shall ask more than I ask for myself. I shall ask you, O stainless and omnipotent High Priest, to give priests to your Church worthy of your spouse and able to discharge the functions of their divine mission. Associate them to your virtues by associating them with your own priesthood; make them feel and always comprehend that they are ministers of the living God, priests of the New Law, and officiating in a temple and sanctuary more holy and awful than Solomon's. Make them, dear Redeemer, holy, innocent, and separated from sinners; make them more elevated than the heavens, compassionate, and able to bear the sins and frailties of men in the bowels of charity; make them so strong in words and good works that they may be able to demolish the works of Satan, to combat the reigning scandals of this world, and reprove and instruct sinners; arm them with a lively zeal for the salvation of souls and for the aggrandizement of your kingdom; preserve them from harsh and imprudent ardour, and give them one seasoned by science and animated by charity.

Make them, beloved Lord, models to their flocks, in order that they may see in them and in their conduct examples of detachment from earthly goods, examples of mortification, humility, faith, modesty, and all the other Christian virtues. Let everything they say or do breathe piety and sanctity, and as everything in their office is divine, so everything in their manner and conduct should be divine as well; and thus, invested with your spirit, they can act according to your counsels and inspirations, so that when offering up your adorable body at the altar, they will be able to bless, to instruct, and to conduct your people in all the ways of salvation. Amen.

CHAPTER VII.

ON JESUS CHRIST AS VICTIM.

JESUS is not only high priest of the Most High and of His Church, but He is also their victim, and St. Paul teaches this truth in almost every one of his Epistles, and particularly in his Epistle to the Hebrews, where he speaks in so profound and sublime a manner on the grand qualities of this victim, the sacrifices which Christ offered up for us, and the great benefits we derive from this victim; and hence we learn from these truths the great love He has for us, and this is the reason St. Paul says to the Ephesians, "that Christ loved us and hath delivered Himself an oblation for us, and a sacrifice to God for an odour of sweetness;"[1] which oblation God accepted, and in it we find our peace and reconciliation. In this chapter we will consider Christ in the character of our victim, and in order to thoroughly know this great sacrifice of Jesus it will be necessary to believe that God wished from the beginning of time that men would offer sacrifice to Him which would typify that of Jesus, and that all the ancient sacrifices are now abolished; and we must know what are the characteristics of Christ as victim, what are His dispositions in this respect, and what were His intentions when offering Himself up and dying for us.

What more are we to believe to be able to explain this attribute of Christ as victim?

We must believe as an infallible truth that God wished man to offer sacrifices and immolate victims to Him in the state of innocence, and after the fall of our first parents, and under the natural law, the written law, and the new law as well; and we must also believe that the blessed in heaven offer up Jesus, and that Christ Himself shall live for ever in the presence of His Father, as the Lamb put to death for the sins of the world. Those who lived in the state of innocence offered themselves up to God as so many sacrifices, stainless and holy, in order to give homage to Him as the author of their being and the principle of their holiness and of all the graces they possessed. The praises which flowed from their hearts and lips, and which appeared in the holy actions they performed for the glory of the Lord, were so many sacrifices offered to God; but after the fall of Adam people were obliged to offer up other victims. God wished man to sacrifice animals to keep before his mind that it was he and

[1] Ephes. v. 2.

not animals that deserved death, and that in His mercy He accepted those animals as substitutes for men. From this circumstance God wished man to understand that He was the absolute master of life and death, and that sin could not be abolished by the blood of animals, but only by the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore, in order to comprehend the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we must believe that He has abolished all the sacrifices offered to God in the Old Law, and that He established a more perfect one in their stead. But why were all those sacrifices abolished? St. Paul tells us why in his Epistle to the Hebrews, where he says: "It is impossible to efface sins with the blood of goats and oxen,"[1] and hence God abolished them to establish the sacrifice of Christ, by means of which men could obtain the remission of their sins. St. Paul tells us also that as the priesthood of the Old Law was abolished and changed into another more holy and perfect, so, too, the sacrifices and victims should cease and be changed as well, because a victim proportioned to the dignity and grandeur of the priest was necessary likewise. St. Paul further says that as the alliance between God and the Jews changed, so, too, the blood of the victim with which the alliance was made should be changed. But as the ancient alliance was only external, and the blood used on the occasion only earthly or ordinary blood, it was necessary that the sacred alliance should be internal according to the spirit, and sealed with a divine blood which would unite us to God; and hence St. Paul says to the Hebrews, "that the legal impurities should be cleansed with the blood of oxen, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."[2] The Jewish people were a figure of the Christian people, just as the Jewish victims were typical of the grand Christian victim Jesus Christ; and hence the Christian people are entirely holy, because their priest and victim have come down from heaven to re-unite themselves with the earth, and to associate man to angels, and hence open to them an entrance to the true sanctuary.

What are the qualities of Jesus as victim?

He is a victim proportioned to God's sovereign majesty, an external victim, a holy victim, and a sanctifying victim. He is a victim proportioned to God's sovereign majesty, because He is God Himself, because His dominion extends over all things, and because we adore Him as the great and sovereign master of all creatures. He is holy and holiness itself; He is just and His justice demands to be satisfied; He is good and merciful, and in Him all graces and bless-

[1] Heb. x. 4. [2] Heb. ix. 23.

ings are contained, and from Him we receive all the gifts we have, whether in the order of nature or of grace. God commanded Moses to establish four kinds of sacrifices to give homage to those four grand attributes. The first, a holocaust or whole burned victim, to signify and adore the omnipotence of God and the sovereign dominion He possesses over all creatures; the second, called the eucharist, and intended to thank God for the benefits received from Him; the third was the sacrifice of propitiation, or the sacrifice for sin, and was offered up to appease God's anger, and make Him propitious; the fourth was the sacrifice of impetration, and was offered up to demand from God all the graces and blessings necessary for salvation. All these sacrifices were agreeable to God, and He accepted them provided that those who offered them had holy dispositions and faith in Jesus Christ. He received them as victims of an agreeable odour, because He saw His Son immolated under the shadows of those sacrifices which prefigured His death on the cross.

When Jesus appeared on this earth, He offered up a sacrifice which contained the full realization of all the ancient sacrifices; and hence He is a victim worthy of God, because He was a holocaust which honoured God in every way befitting the dignity of His being, and because He is a God annihilated before a God, and dying and destroying, in a certain sense, His existence in the presence of His Father. Never was a holocaust like this, because He by whom all creatures subsist and were made, offered Himself up and died to do honour to His Father; and when offering Himself He offered all creatures existing in Him as well. God saw up to this time an almost infinite number of animals destroyed and consumed by fire in His presence; but in Jesus He saw a man-God dying to honour and glorify Him, and hence God found in His death a glory suitable to His dignity and grandeur. If all creatures perished and were annihilated, God would appear great in their destruction; but He would not be on that account as much adored as He merits. The greatest adoration and honour which could be given to God come from Jesus covered with opprobrium and humiliation on the cross, because when that divine victim is treated as a worm of the earth, as the reproach of man, and the outcast of the people, then it is that God receives an infinite honour.

Jesus was a victim of propitiation worthy of an offended God, because He delivered Himself to death to appease and satisfy God's justice; and hence St. John says: "My little children, I write those things to you that you may not sin; but if any man sin we have an

advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the just, and He is the propitiation not only for our sins, but for those of the whole world."[1] This is the victim who carried our sins upon Him on the cross, the victim prefigured by that to which Aaron and all the people raised their hands as if to place their sins upon it, and thus substitute it for immolation in their place. Jesus was loaded with our iniquities, His Father put them on Him, and as such He became a malediction for us, and was treated as if He were a sinner, although He was sanctity itself; and in this way He appeared and satisfied His Father's justice in a manner befitting the demands of that justice and the nature of sin. All sin came from pride, the love of pleasures and worldly goods, and Jesus died a victim of humiliated excess, loaded with sufferings, stripped of everything, and in extreme poverty.

Jesus was a victim of impetration, because He sacrificed Himself to obtain and to merit for us the graces necessary for salvation, and even the temporal goods necessary for this present life. He spent His whole life praying for us, and asking His Father to sanctify us. I ask you, He says to His Father, "to keep them from evil, to sanctify them in truth; and not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word believe in Me."[2] Jesus was praying for us while He moved along under the heavy load of the cross, while He was being nailed to it, and while offering up His supplication "with a loud cry;"[3] and it is in the name and by the prayer of this victim that we obtain all we demand, as He Himself promised when He said: "Amen, amen, I say unto you that whatsoever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you."[4]

Jesus was and is a victim of eucharistic sacrifice or thanksgiving, because He offered Himself to His Father to thank Him for all He did for human nature, by uniting the divine personality to it, and also for all He did for man through His own ministry; and hence we must regard Jesus as the victim of thanksgiving for all Christians, and we must hope to obtain all we ask at prayer if we offer Jesus as the victim of impetration. His Father gives Him unceasingly to us, and hence we should offer Him to His Father with feelings of gratitude, because we could not have anything so grand or so holy to offer Him as His own Son Jesus.

How are we to understand when we said above that the victim of the new alliance is living and eternal?

We can say that Jesus is a victim in many ways—1st. Because

[1] 1 Ep. iii. 1. 2. [2] John, xvii. 15, 17, 20. [3] Heb. v. 7. [4] John, xvi. 23.

He saw the fall of Adam from eternity, and then offered Himself a victim for mankind, in order to raise them up in the future and satisfy the justice of His offended Father. 2nd. Being a priest for ever, He will offer up eternally before His Father the same victim and the same sacrifice which He once offered in time. His sacrifice shall never be interrupted on this earth, because man shall always be found there to be made just, and sinful men to be justified; and it will continue in heaven, where Jesus shall always be in His Father's presence as one living and who was dead. 3rd. We can well say that Jesus has been an eternal victim, because He was offered and immolated in all times—before the law, under the law, and in the New Law, and, as we said before, He will be offered eternally in heaven in His glorified state.

He was offered before the law, because all the just who had faith in Him, and to whom God revealed the mystery of His death, offered Him up in their sacrifices, all of which they regarded as so many figures of His future sacrifice. Adam offered Him when He presented a penitent heart to God. Abel did the same by his presents, and in himself when immolated by his brother Cain, and which St. Paul calls a figure of the death of Jesus: "His blood cries more successfully to heaven for us than the blood of Abel."[1] Abraham did the same when he obeyed God commanding him to offer up his son in sacrifice; but Isaac was spared because a ram was found near, and was immolated instead. This marvellous event was a figure of Christ's sacrifice, whose divinity, figured by Isaac, was untouched, and whose humanity, crowned with thorns and figured by the ram entangled in thorns, was sacrificed and put to death.

Jesus was sacrificed under the law in various figures, because all the sacrifices which God ordered to be offered to Him were a figure of the sacrifice of Jesus. The paschal lamb, immolated by the Israelites in Egypt, was a figure of Jesus, who delivered us from the exterminating angel let loose upon us by Adam's sin. The two sparrows, one of which was immolated upon the living waters, and the other let free after being sprinkled with the blood of that sacrificed, was another figure of the sacrifice of Jesus; and the two goats, one of which was immolated, and the other sent into the desert loaded with the sins of the people, was a figure of Him also. We can say, in a certain sense, that what the justice of men sometimes does when it condemns a man to death, and yet executes him only in effigy, the justice of God did under the law by executing Jesus under the

[1] Heb. xxii. 24.

shadows of the Jewish sacrifice. St. Augustine says that all the true Jews, who were Christians in advance, saw and honoured in all these sacrifices the true victim who was to be immolated for the sins of the world.

Jesus was immolated under the New Law, because when the plenitude of time was come the Son of God invested Himself in our humanity, and offered Himself up not in figure, but in true sacrifice. He was a real victim from the very moment of His incarnation, and all along through His life—a victim which was to be soon sacrificed for the expiation of sin, and whose death was to be the reconciliation of the world. Jesus carried during life the feeling and the spirit of His approaching sacrifice, because He always saw Calvary and the cross on which He was to die, and because He accepted death, and offered it unceasingly to His Father; and hence He was the victim of all times. This victim never ceases to offer Himself on earth in the adorable sacrament of the altar, in which He instituted the means to be always present, and continually renewing in our presence the sacrifice of His death. He remains on earth to be the victim of the Catholic faith; and through His own infinite love for us this victim will be in heaven for eternity, to be offered to the Father in thanksgiving for all the mercies we have ever received. St. John saw Him before the throne of God as a lamb upon the altar, and at whose feet all the saints threw down their crowns, thus acknowledging that they obtained eternal glory through Him and His sacrifice.

What do you understand by that quality of Jesus which makes Him a holy victim?

I understand that a holy God should demand a victim holy and without stain, and hence persons who offered victims in the Old Law should offer those only which had no defect, because they were a figure of Christ who could not have a defect. He is holy also, because He is God, and because He received the plenitude of the Holy Ghost, and hence is full of grace and virtue—the holy one of the Lord and the just one by excellence. He was holy in His thoughts and in His desires, in His words and His actions, in His soul and body, and no one justly reproached Him with sin. The priest celebrating at the altar calls Him a victim, pure, holy, and without stain; and what could a man-God be but the essence of holiness, from whom emanates so much splendour that men and angels never cease admiring Him.

How are we to understand that Jesus is not only a victim of holiness, but a victim of sanctity as well?

He is a victim of sanctity, because He obtained by His death the remission of sin which He washed out with His blood, and St. Paul says "that He was offered once to exhaust the sins of many,"[1] and that "we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus."[2] This victim sanctified us also, because He not only washed out our sins, but God has made a new and eternal alliance with us through the blood of this victim; an alliance which so perfectly and so intimately unites us to Him, that we become one with Him and are regarded by God as beings incorporated with His divine Son; an alliance which makes us not only externally, but internally holy, by making us participators in His sanctity, and holy in the sight of God on account of the charity diffused on our hearts. We have a right to enter heaven through the blood of this victim, because when we shall appear at the hour of death before our Judge, we should be sprinkled with this blood, and present it to Him at the foot of His throne. When the destroying angel shall see us marked with this blood, he will pass on and will not harm us, but will immolate the Egyptians—that is, all who are not stamped with this blood, or who die in their sins because they loved the things of this world.

Can we discover all the qualities of a true sacrifice in that of Jesus?

To do so we must find in it the five principal characteristics of a true sacrifice. 1st. The sanctification of the victim which is made by choice, or by the separation from all other victims of the thing to be offered. 2nd. The oblation or offering up of the victim before God by the priest. 3rd. The immolation caused by the death or destruction of the thing offered. 4th. The consummation or clarification of the victim which is caused by the fire which consumes it. 5th. The communion by which the priest, the people, and even God communicate of the victim. The Jews made three parts of their victim; the priests eat one part, the people eat the second part, and the third part, which was consumed by fire, was regarded as belonging to God, because He accepted and received it as an agreeable sacrifice.

We find all these attributes in the grand sacrifice of Christ, because He was separated by His Father and chosen to die for mankind; because He was offered at His Incarnation in the crib at Bethlehem, in the temple at Jerusalem, and elsewhere; He was immolated upon the cross, and was consumed or clarified in the mystery of His resurrection, because the glorified state into which He then fully passed was as a fire, which consumed in His body every-

[1] Heb. ix. 28. [2] Heb. x. 10.

thing which appeared earthly or sinful in it. The communion of the victim was made on Ascension Day, because God the Father received Him on that day into His bosom; the angels communicated by loving, adoring, and uniting themselves to Him; we communicate in Him when we believe in Him, and when we partake of the adorable Eucharist; and the Jews and all others communicate in advance, because all shall communicate at their conversion hereafter. Behold now the many wonders of this adorable sacrifice, all of which manifest its sanctity and its excellence.

What were the dispositions of Jesus as victim, when He approached the cross on which He was to consummate His sacrifice by His death?

All His dispositions whilst approaching the cross merit our adoration, and all are contained in the words of Isaias: "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and He opened not His mouth."[1] He never lost sight of the cross, which He regarded as the altar on which He was to be immolated; and His yearnings for this immolation increased in proportion as the hour of His death drew near, because He said: "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death."[2] This victim offered Himself up in profound silence and in absolute submission to the will of His Father. He was not forced to the altar to be sacrificed, because He went voluntarily and with unfeigned love. He did not complain of the bad treatment inflicted upon Him by His executioners, because He respected the justice of His Father in all things, and paid Him homage by immolating Himself to satisfy that justice. And, finally, when He arrived at Mount Calvary, He permitted Himself to be nailed to the cross without the least murmur or resistance; and hence St. Paul says: "He offered Himself up with a great cry and with tears,"[3] and He died in profound peace from the excess of His sufferings and love for man.

What were the intentions of Jesus in offering Himself up in sacrifice, and dying for man?

To make known to us not only the magnitude and enormity of mortal sin and the love He has for us, but He wished to teach us, Christians, that our lives must be a continual sacrifice by the mortification of our passions, and by the practice of all the Christian virtues; and hence St. Peter says: "Be you also as living stones built, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."[4] We said before that we were

[1] Isaias, liii. 7. [2] Matt, xx. 18. [3] Heb. v. 7. [4] 1 Ep. ii. 5.

made priests with Christ by means of the union we contracted with Him at our baptism, not to sacrifice animals like the priests of the Old Law, but to offer ourselves up as spiritual sacrifices sanctified and offered up through Jesus, because the Father receives nothing but through "Him in whom and through whom," says St. Paul, "we have access to the Father."[1]

What conditions should our sacrifices have?

Each sacrifice should be entire and continual. It should be entire, because everything demands this complete sacrifice, because such a sacrifice is necessary to give homage to God, and because it is necessary to satisfy His justice in order to thank Him for His mercies and to obtain the aid we need. The sovereignty of God demands the annihilation of every one of us, and we should make Him this offering not only at our death, but during our whole life, by placing ourselves every day before Him with that intention, and crying out with holy David: "My substance is nothing before thee."[2] The divine justice demands that as we have given all to the world and to creatures by our sins, we will sacrifice all to Him by our penance. The bounty and liberality of God demand that we offer up and sacrifice ourselves to Him, so as to testify our gratitude for the countless blessings we have received, and are every day receiving, from Him. His mercy demands that we should stand continually before Him, stripped of every grace, and hoping that He would hear our appeals and relieve our miseries, and hence our sacrifice cannot be entire till we offer up to Him our soul and body, our goods and actions, and everything around us.

We must offer Him our body, because St. Paul says to the Romans: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing, unto God, your reasonable service;"[3] and hence our bodies should be a living sacrifice, and as we cannot destroy them we can humble and mortify them. We shall be a living sacrifice when our souls shall live the life of God, and when we shall be sanctified by the presence of the Holy Ghost; and our sacrifice will be a holy one when our members shall be members of Jesus Christ, and, finally, our body shall be a sacrifice agreeable to God when we have offered it up to Him as Jesus did with His body. Jesus assumed His body to offer it up and to sacrifice it to His Father, and hence it is just that we should offer up to Him what He has given us, in order to return love for love to Jesus who, as St. Paul says, "loved us, and delivered

[1] Ephes. ii. 18. [2] Psalms, xxxviii. 6. [3] Rom. xii. 1.

Himself for us, an oblation and sacrifice to God, for an odour of sweetness."[1] This divine Saviour has not offered Himself in part, but entirely, and without any reservation; and hence St. Chrysostom says that "our bodies will become a holy sacrifice when our eyes see nothing bad in them, when our tongues speak no evil, when we do not give our ears to slander or worldly conversations, when our hands are not employed in bad actions, and when our feet do not carry us to profanities." But it will not suffice to avoid evil, for St. Paul says to the Romans: "As you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity, so now yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification;"[2] and hence we must use our hands to give alms and relieve the poor, we must employ our tongue to bless God and sing His praises, we must use our ears to hear His word, our feet to frequent holy places, and our whole body in deeds of penance and mortification, because, says Ecclesiasticus, "it is a wholesome sacrifice to give heed to the commandments and to depart from all iniquity."[3] Those who offered sacrifices in the Old Law were commanded to examine them carefully beforehand, so that no defect could be found in them; and how much more careful should we be to make ourselves pure and holy before God, who invariably rejects every victim in which He finds the least defect. Worldlings think it suffices to offer their bodies to God every morning; but God rejects eyes accustomed to evil glances, hands employed in violence and robberies, feet running to theatres and other profane amusements, tongues which speak loose, lying, and dangerous language, and hearts steeped in sinful thoughts and desires; and hence He said to the Israelites: "To what purpose do you offer to me a multitude of victims, for I will turn away my eyes from you when you stretch forth your hands to me, and I will not hear you when you multiply your prayers, for your hands are full of blood."[4]

Therefore, let us sanctify our bodies, so that they may be victims worthy to be offered to God; and before we do so we should have offered Him our souls, because God does not demand the sacrifice of external things only, as this proves sometimes difficult to do; but it is the sacrifice of the heart that He specially demands, and this sacrifice consists in the practice of Christian virtues, and in the exercise of faith, humility, contrition, and prayer. The exercise of faith sacrifices all our vain reasonings by captivating our spirit, humility holds us as nothing before God, and charity disposes us to give our life for our brother. The love of God makes us die to the love of creatures, and

[1] Ephes. v. 2. [2] Rom. vi. 19. [3] Eccles. xxxv. 2. [4] Isaias, i. 11, 15.

hence our Redeemer says that "it is greater than all the sacrifices and holocausts to love God with your whole heart, and your neighbour as yourself."[1] Contrition makes us die to sin, and the sorrow which it causes in the soul is, according to holy David, "a sacrifice to God," because it bruises and humbles the heart before God, and this is the kind of sacrifice God requires and always accepts; and hence St. Augustine says: "That God does not demand the sacrifice of a slaughtered beast, but that of a sorrowful and afflicted heart." The fear of God's judgments, the sight of our crimes, the recollection of God's goodness and the ingratitude of the sinner, are the knife which immolates the penitent's heart, the fire which consumes it, and the charity which Jesus came to scatter upon this earth. There is no need of wood or other fuel to nourish this fire, because it is sufficient for itself; and so far is it from destroying the victim, that it gives Him an increase of life, for the more we burn in this fire the more we live, because its nature is not to burn us to a temporal death. The tears flowing from the eyes of the penitent are, in a certain sense, the blood of the victim, and by those spiritual sacrifices we appease the anger of God, for, says the prophet Micheas, "What shall I offer to the Lord that is worthy, wherewith shall I kneel before the Most High? Shall I offer Him holocausts, and calves of a year old? shall the Lord be appeased with a thousand rams, or with many thousand of fat he-goats? shall I give my first-born for my wickedness, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" No, says the prophet, "I will show thee what the Lord requires from thee, to do judgment, to love mercy, and to walk solicitous with thy God."[2] These passages contain all that God demands from us, and the sacrifice which we make of our soul by practising the Christian virtues pointed out in the above texts is that which will be pleasing and acceptable to Him. And when we act according to truth and justice, and give to all what religion demands, do not those acts inflict great violence on our nature and on our passions, and how many crosses and contradictions do we not suffer from the world on account of them? What grander sacrifice could we make when offended than to stifle all the resentments of self-love, and to suffer in silence everything said and done to us? Is it not a fine sacrifice also to walk with God in humility, to follow Him with submission, and never to be led by our passions or self-will, but always to depend on God, and to subject ourselves entirely to Him? Could anyone walk with viligance, fear, and respect in the presence of God, and not live in a spirit of continual

[1] Mark, xii. 33. [2] Micheas, vi. 6, 7, 8.

sacrifice, and hold his spirit, his heart, and all his actions in perpetual restraint and recollection, and thus give to God the respect, the adoration, and the love we all owe Him? Patience and obedience enable us to sacrifice a multitude of feeling, for patience bridles and subdues all the sallies of anger and pride for the love of God, and obedience sacrifices our spirit, our will, our body; and, in a word, every virtue we may practise will surely contribute to make us victims for God.

After having offered our souls to God in sacrifice, is it not fit to offer Him our worldly goods as well?

It is; but how are we to do it? We sacrifice our worldly goods to God when we make a holy use of them, and particularly when we are not attached to them, and when we use them according to the design and intention God had in placing them in our hands. He wishes us to employ them for the necessities and requirements of our station in life, and that those necessities should be regulated by the rules of the gospel, and not according to the cravings of our appetites. He wishes also that we should give to the poor in proportion to what we possess, and hence St. Paul says to the Hebrews: "Do not forget to do good, and to impart, for by such sacrifices God's favour is obtained."[1] The poor are as an altar, on which we place our offering for Jesus to receive it, because whatsoever we do for the least of His little ones, we do for Him. Alms deeds, given with compunction of heart, become a sacrifice of propitiation, by means of which we redeem our sins, and hence we should use our goods and riches in this way, because God did not give us those riches to make idols of them, nor to sacrifice them to vanity or ambition, or to procure criminal pleasures, but to sacrifice them to that good God who gave them to us.

How should we offer up all our actions so as to make an entire sacrifice of them to God?

All our actions ought to be directed to God as our last end, and hence we should seek His glory only in all we do, just as Jesus, our victim, sought His Father's glory only in all He did. Like Him, we should have no other object in living and acting than to honour the grandeur and goodness of our God; and hence all our actions should have charity for a beginning, for if they burn in that fire they will ascend up to God, and will be worthy of Him. And St. Augustine teaches: "That every action we perform with the intention of attaching ourselves to God, and with the intention of

[1] Heb. xiii. 16.

being united to that supreme being who alone can make us happy, is a true sacrifice; and that persons consecrated and devoted to His service are themselves a true sacrifice, provided they truly die to the world in order to live to God."

How can we offer all the creatures about us to God?

This world in which we live is the divine temple in which God dwells, and fills with His power, His justice, and His mercy; and we live in the midst of this temple in order to be the mouthpiece and the priest of those creatures, and to direct and offer them up to their author.

How are our sacrifices to be continual?

St. Augustine says "that we must learn to make our sacrifice after the manner Jesus made His;" but His was never interrupted, because it began in the stainless womb of His virgin mother, and continued during His life till He consummated it by dying on the cross. We were offered to God at our baptism, and all our life should be a continual sacrifice, ending at that death to which we are daily moving, and this is the reason St. Paul says that "we should always carry the mortifications of Jesus in our bodies." We ought to announce the death of the Lord, not only on certain occasions, such as Good Friday, and whenever we assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, but we ought to announce it every day till He comes to judge us, by dying to sin, to the world, and to ourselves, and by continually crucifying the old man. It was necessary, in the Old Law, to have a victim always on the altar, in order that sacrifice should never cease; and hence we should take care to offer our sacrifice in the morning, to continue it till the afternoon, and then to offer another to last till the next day. It is necessary to be always in such a disposition that we can present ourselves at morning and night times before God, and there consecrate to His service and glory all the days of our lives—our infancy, our manhood, and our old age. We offered the morning sacrifice already at our baptism, and we will offer the evening sacrifice by our final perseverance, and thus we will never interrupt our sacrifice, nor come off the altar.

How is this continual sacrifice interrupted?

We commenced this sacrifice at our baptism by offering up and placing the victim on the altar; then it is watered with the blood of Jesus, and sanctified and consecrated to God. But very often we do not finish our sacrifice, on account of our languor, because we do not wish it to continue a sufficiently long time, and because we do it violence by keeping the victim too much bound. When we follow

bad example and the seductions of our passions, we interrupt our continual sacrifice by those criminal pursuits. We see thousands flying from the altar, hurrying after idols, and bearing away the victim into the midst of a corrupted world, to offer it up to the idols of vanity, impurity, avarice, and ambition; and thus they extinguish the fire which was to consume it, and instead of the victim they present the corruption of the sacrifice, which must extinguish the fire of the Holy Ghost in their hearts; and hence St. Paul says to the Thessalonians: "Do not extinguish the Spirit."[1] We must keep this fire furnished with new materials so as to prevent it from expiring, and we ought also do good works, and pray and weep without ceasing, to preserve our spiritual fervour.

When will our sacrifice be consumed?

It will be surely consumed at death, and the sacraments which the Church commands us to receive on that solemn occasion are for no other purpose than to prepare us to finish well this grand and last action of our lives; and after we have received them, we ought to be able to say with St. Paul to the Philippians: "I am as a victim which has received the last aspersion, and only await to receive the last stroke to be immolated."[2] We will render homage to the sovereign grandeur of God by this destruction of our life, and to His wisdom and omnipotence likewise. Death makes us understand that man's life passes away as a shadow, and that God is always the same, and His years without end. Our ashes proclaim from the tomb that our victim is consumed, and that God alone is He who is, and hence **they render homage to His eternity.**

Therefore, what is a person dying but a victim stretched upon the bed of death, as the victim for sacrifice is upon the altar, and whom God is going to immolate as an object of His eternal anger on account of His sins, or as an object of His unspeakable mercy on account of his holy and penitential life. If that dying person be a victim purified and sanctified, he is going to be redeemed from the slavery and dangers of this world, and to be, in addition, the everlasting object of God's love and affection. Behold these two deaths one of which will surely be ours. Every moment we live brings us nearer to the altar, because we die some little every day, and hence our sacrifice is being consumed by little and little.

Let us picture to ourselves the grand preparations made for death, the sacraments administered with becoming decency and devotion; the prayers prescribed by the Church are recited over the expiring

[1] Thess. v. 19. [2] Philip. ii. 17.

victim; the crucifix is in the hand of the priest or the victim; the wax light is blazing; the touching ardent exhortation of the pious pastor is being spoken; and the tears and sighs of parents and friends are heard and seen; and all these are so many ceremonies over the expiring victim. But when this victim is dead, behold how still and motionless he lies before us, and what a homily he preaches to us on the vanity and nothingness of this world! All flesh is grass, and all its glory is as the flower of the field, and this dead body cries out with holy Job: "I have said to rottenness, thou art my father; and to worms, my mother and my sister."[1] And now it is as nothingness and as a little dust before God; his sacrifice is finished, and he shall be either the food of eternal fire or in the house of the living God for ever.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, OUR VICTIM.

O Jesus, my Saviour and my God, I adore you in that quality of victim which you have taken to give homage to your Father and to reconcile us to Him. O victim of charity, mercy, justice, sanctity, propitiation, and thanksgiving, I ought to sacrifice myself to God like you. You offered yourself to your Father without any reserve, and why should not my holocaust be entire and undivided like yours? But, alas! I must admit to my own shame and to the confusion of all Christians, that we offer only a part, and sometimes only the least part, of ourselves.

We devote our youth to the world, and we often offer to you only the refuse of creatures and the last years of our lives sullied by so many crimes. You demand all, you do not wish to see the victim divided, and what an injustice to you, my Jesus, to make so bad a division. Ah! my loving Jesus, take me entirely to yourself, rescue me from the profane altars where I am every day sacrificing myself, and where I am losing all the sanctity you gave me through the sacraments. Great God, you formerly consumed by fire the sacrifice which Elias offered to you, together with the altar, the wood, and the water with which it was sprinkled, and never was a sacrifice so complete before. Send down, my God, this divine fire from heaven to consume in me all that is earthly, so that I may be entirely consumed for the glory of your name, and that my soul may be inflamed during life with its hallowed flames. You lighted this fire in my heart long ago at my baptism; but, alas! I extinguished it, and now I find in its

[1] Job, xvii. 4.

stead something like that turbid water found by the Jews in the pits where they hid the sacred fire; and what could I do in my unhappy state but to expose it, like the Jews, to the Sun of Justice, in order to rekindle this divine fire within me.

Come forth, my divine Jesus; come forth, O divine Sun, from the cloud which hides you from my view; pour down your celestial beams on my turbid heart, and light within it the holy fire of your love, so that I may be able to offer up my sacrifice with the same dispositions with which you offered yours. Give me a portion of that spirit of sacrifice which you had during life, so that I may always regard myself as a victim upon the altar, giving homage to you by my adorations, my profound humility, and my entire submission to your holy will. Ah! my dear Jesus, I unfortunately interrupted the sacrifice I began at my baptism, for the world seduced me off the altar, and now I am a criminal victim of cupidity, and I have only the sacrifice of the evening of my life to offer you. And as I can never again be an innocent victim, it is just that I shall be a penitent one, in order that my cries and my tears, my love and my grief, my penances and my mortifications, may immolate me with an entire confidence in your mercy.

O loving and true God! I offer myself to you with your Son Jesus, in order to give homage to your sovereign being and justice, both of which I have offended, and to your mercy, which has poured down so many graces upon me. O my Jesus, it is time for me to prepare for the last blow which is to sacrifice me; it is time to bow down my head, for I see the arm uplifted which is to give me the stroke of death.

Behold me, O Lord! loaded with my crimes, saturated with tears, and adoring the omnipotent hand going to sacrifice me. Strike me, dear Jesus! strike and spare me not, for I am that heartless criminal who dared to rebel against you, and hence it is just that I be immolated to the glory of the King of Ages—to my immortal and invisible ruler. Behold, dear Jesus! my body, my heart, and my soul, so often purpled with your blood and watered with your tears.

Increase your love in me, so that it may consume and transform me into you, that I may die a victim immolated to thy divine mercy, and, filled with the liveliest sentiments of contrition and humility, that I may be admitted into God's presence, and offer myself up to Him in His sanctuary, so that He may unite me to Himself, and receive me into His own eternal bosom. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON JESUS, VICTIM IN THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

We can have no difficulty in believing that Jesus is a victim on the altars of our churches, and that the adorable Mass is a true sacrifice, because wherever Jesus our Saviour is, He is there as a victim offering Himself to His Father, and when the priest offers Him on the altar with the prayers and ceremonies instituted for that end, he offers a true sacrifice also, because the sacrifice is nothing more than the offering. This offering, with the prayers and ceremonies accompanying it, constitutes the tremendous sacrifice of the Mass; and hence we say that the Mass is the sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus, who is present on the altar, and who is offered by the priest to God for himself and the people.

Once a victim was offered in the Old Law, it was obligatory that it should die; but no matter how often Christ is offered in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, He does not die, because once that He died He entered into immortality, and can never die again; but though He is risen and living, we continue to offer Him as dead and immolated for us. We can even say that He dies in a mystic manner in the holy Mass, because as far as we can comprehend, He annihilates and humbles Himself to a certain species of death; and in so far as He appears to us in this sacrifice, He appears not to be living, whereas he is a truly glorious and immortal being. We can say also that the Church offers Him to His Father as He always saw Him; but as all is present and nothing past in God, and as He saw His Son Jesus dying on the cross and living, He saw Him always dying and always living, as St. John saw Him in heaven; and it is in this manner that the priest offers Him at the altar; and although the bloody sacrifice of the cross is past as far as we can understand, it is still before God as if being made.

Have we not abundant proof in the Sacred Scriptures that the sacrament of the altar is a true sacrifice?

We have plenty in the Old and New Testaments, and in the writings of the holy fathers as well. The prophet Malachy says that God speaks thus to the Jewish people: "I will not receive a gift from your hand, because my name is great amongst the Gentiles, from the rising to the going down of the sun, and in every place there

is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation; for my name, saith the Lord of hosts, is great amongst the Gentiles."[1]

This prophecy could not refer to the Jewish sacrifices, because they could not be offered anywhere but in the temple at Jerusalem, because the Lord said that He will not receive any more sacrifices from the Jewish people, and because He says that this pure oblation will be offered everywhere and amongst all nations. The text could not refer to the sacrifice of the cross, because that was only once offered amongst the Jews, and the sacrifice of which the prophet Malachy speaks was to be offered many times, not only at Jerusalem, but in all places and amongst all nations. That is the interpretation given to the text by St. Justin Martyr, St. Ireneus, and St. Augustine; and therefore the sacrifice foretold by the prophet Malachy must be the unbloody sacrifice of the altar, which is offered up in all places and amongst all peoples; and not only offered for one time, but every day from the rising to the setting of the sun, even though it is the only and the same victim.

We will now produce texts from the New Testament to prove conclusively that the holy Eucharist is the sacrifice foretold by Malachy. When Christ was instituting the sacrament of the Eucharist, He said: "Take ye and eat, this is my body which shall be delivered for you, and, likewise, this chalice is the new testament in my blood;"[2] and hence we see that Christ's body was offered and His blood actually shed for us, and thus He represented in advance the death He afterwards suffered for us. In this death His blood was separated from His body, and so much so that by the virtue and power of the sacramental institution the body and blood of Jesus are, as it were, separately placed, because the officiating priest says when consecrating the bread, "This is my body," and when consecrating the wine says, "This is my blood." Here we see clearly indicated the effusion of Christ's blood, and consequently the death of our Redeemer; and we renew the memory of this death as often as we celebrate this most hallowed mystery; and hence St. Paul says, that we "announce the death of the Lord till He comes."[3]

We can renew this death of our Redeemer by reading the holy gospel, or by performing some other pious action, or by vividly picturing it to our imaginations, because the sacrifice of our altars is a continuation of that of Calvary, and is renewed every day in our churches by a mystic representation.

This Scriptural truth is confirmed by the unanimous evidence of

[1] Mal. i. 11. [2] 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25. [3] 1 Cor. xi. 26.

the holy fathers—by St. Justin Martyr in his dialogues against Tryphon; by St. Ireneus in his fourth book, chapter twenty-second; by St. Chrysostom in his twenty-seventh homily; by St. Augustine in his City of God, book sixteenth, chapter twenty-second; and by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews. These fathers, and all others of the first and latter ages, called the Eucharist a veritable sacrifice which the officiating priest offers up to God; and after the oblation he partakes of it himself, and then distributes it to those assisting at Mass, who are prepared to receive it; and this communion of the priest and the people is necessary for and supposes a true sacrifice; and, finally, all those fathers, and especially St. Cyprian, have spoken of the sacrifice offered up by Melchisedech, as a figure of that which our priests offer at the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

But how are we to understand St. Paul when he says: "By one oblation He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;"[1] and again he says that "Christ was once offered to exhaust the sins of many."[2] According to those texts is it not doing an injury to the sacrifice of the cross to say that Christ still offers Himself in the sacrament of the Eucharist?

To understand this point well, we must not believe that the Eucharist is a different victim and oblation from that of the cross, because the same Jesus was offered up in a bloody manner on the cross, and is now offered up in an unbloody manner in the Eucharist; and we must also believe that though Christ died in the sacrifice of the cross, He does not die in the sacrifice of the Eucharist, because He arose impassible and immortal from the dead, and, besides, we only renew His death in the sacrifice of the Eucharist.

Therefore, the sacrifice of the altar does no injury to the sacrifice of the cross, and instead of making it appear insufficient, it exalts it in an admirable manner, because it is a continuation of the sacrifice of the cross, and keeps constantly before our eyes the immense love of Jesus for us, and because it applies the merits and fruits of the sacrifice of the cross to us. What an admirable invention of the power and love of Jesus, who when He wished to leave His Church a different sacrifice from those of the Old Law, left Himself as a continual victim which His spouse could offer for the expiation of her sins, and to demand all the graces she stands in need of—a sacrifice which we can only offer when we offer ourselves in sacrifice.

What are the dispositions necessary for assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass?

[1] Heb. x. 14 [2] Heb. ix. 28.

There are two classes of Christians who are obliged to be present at the holy sacrifice of the Mass—namely, the just and those in the state of actual sin. The just and the innocent should be present at this august sacrifice to offer up Jesus with the priest, and to offer up themselves as well, because being members of Christ's mystic body, they participate of His priesthood, and ought to offer this sacrifice to God with the same intentions which Jesus offered Himself to His Father. And not only should they offer up Jesus in sacrifice, but they should offer up themselves as making only one victim with Him, and only one man as well, and hence the sacrifice which is made at the Mass, and the victim offered up there, are the sacrifice and the victim of the innocent souls which they offer, and with which they are offered to the living and true God.

It is necessary to be in a state of grace at the holy sacrifice of the Mass to merit an increase of God's graces and blessings, because acts of religion merit eternal life only when they are performed in a state of sanctity and justice. Touching the second class of Christians who should be present at the holy sacrifice of the Mass—that is those who are in a state of mortal sin and whose lives are entirely worldly—they should remember that in the early ages of the Church those who fell into crime after baptism had to submit to public penances, and were not allowed to assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass until they had performed long and rigorous penances. They should also remember that the Church always demands that whenever her children assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, they must do so with holy dispositions, because when she orders us to do a thing, she commands us not only to do it, but to do it well; and hence when she commands us to hear Mass, she wants us to come there to adore and praise the Lord, and not to insult Him. She wishes sinners to assist at it with feelings of compunction, manifesting externally the shame and confusion they feel at being in sin, and their sorrow and regret for being separated from their God. This class of Christians should conduct themselves in the Church, during the tremendous mystery, as the publican did in the temple at Jerusalem, striking their breast to signify their sorrow, and not daring to lift their eyes towards the sanctuary or to heaven.

We should also remember that the holy Mass is a continuation of the sacrifice of the cross, and that we ought to assist at it as if we were looking at Jesus dying on Calvary. We should not forget at that holy time all the sufferings, humiliations, and bad treatment this divine Saviour endured for us, and the holy dispositions of patience, submission, and love with which He bore them. The recollection of the

sufferings and death of Jesus, which we relate in this mystery, should excite in us such feelings of love, gratitude, and compunction, as if we were actually present on Calvary, and witnesses of the terrible tragedy of a dying Redeemer. There were two classes of persons on Calvary witnessing the last throbbings of a dying Saviour—namely, the just and the sinner. Amongst the just were the stainless Mother of Jesus, St. John, His beloved disciple, and the pious women who accompanied them; and amongst the unjust were the Jews who executed Christ, and the thousands who approved of their blasphemous conduct. The just regarded the sad spectacle with proper dispositions, because they entered into the sentiments of their suffering Saviour, they yearned to die with Him, and their love for Him filled their hearts with a thousand holy emotions. The unjust, or the sinners, insulted and blasphemed Him upon the cross; and some amongst them, being moved for their sins, retired from the sickening scene, striking their breasts, and wondering at the savage cruelty of man. But, alas, how few do we see now returning from the holy sacrifice of the Mass striking their breasts and touched with sorrow for their sins, because most of them, like the Jewish executioners, crucify Him again in themselves; others insult Him by their immodest conduct, their loose language, their irreverences, their indecent demeanour, and their criminal conversations; and hence those people cannot have the necessary dispositions for assisting at the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

What, then, is the best manner for assisting at Mass?

The best manner for assisting at Mass is to conform ourselves to the spirit of the Church, and to say there, at least in substance, the same prayers which the priest says at the altar, for they are holy and all suitable to our necessities. It is necessary to offer up this holy sacrifice by adoring God, thanking Him for His benefits, appeasing His offended justice, and begging all the graces we stand in need of. We should divide the holy Mass into three parts. 1st. We should regard all the prayers and ceremonies, from the beginning of the Mass to the consecration, as a preparation for the holy sacrifice itself; and after the consecration we can adore Christ present on the altar, we can pray to Him to offer Himself up to His Father for us, and we should communicate actually or in spirit. All that is said or done after the communion is to thank God, and to demand the effects of Christ's presence within us; and hence we must see that there is nothing more august, and nothing more holy, than what takes place at the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

The priest prays at the Mass for himself and the people; he sings

the praises of the Lord, and confesses his offences; he sighs and excites himself to sorrow and to hope; he represents to God all the necessities of his people; he reads the holy gospel and pious prayers; he prays for all in authority, for the Church militant and the Church suffering in purgatory, that God may protect the one and relieve the agonies of the other, and that both shall be for ever united with the Church triumphant in heaven. Jesus descends upon the altar, and remains at the same time by a miracle of His omnipotent power at the right hand of His Father in heaven. He comes into the hands of the priest, to take, as it were, a new birth and to become a new victim amongst us, and we send Him back into heaven to hold a divine converse with His Father for us, and we finally partake of this victim by receiving the holy communion, and hence we are nourished with the very God we had just offered up in conjunction with the priest. Oh, what a sublime and comforting mystery is this, and how many graces can we not receive at the august sacrifice of the Mass, if we only apply ourselves with faith, devotion, and love to all that passes there.

Is the holy sacrifice offered up to the Blessed Virgin or to the saint in whose honour it is said?

No, the holy sacrifice is offered up to God alone, and the Church always prevented this holy sacrifice to be offered to any creature, and obliges us to regard the pagans as idolators for offering sacrifices to men, even though they believe them to be gods; and hence the Church not only does not permit the Mass to be offered up to any of the saints, but she expressly prohibits it. What stranger anomaly could there be than to offer up a God in sacrifice to one of His own creatures? When the Church permits the holy Mass to be said in honour of the Queen of Heaven or any other saint, it must be remembered that that Mass is said to thank God for the graces He has given those saints, and to ask, through their intercession, whatsoever we stand most in need of, and to ask, above all, the grace to conform our lives with the life they led here upon earth; and hence whenever a priest says Mass he does not say, I offer up this holy sacrifice to the Mother of God, to St. Joseph, or to any other of the saints; but he says, I offer it up to you, my God, the end and the centre of our faith and worship.

EJACULATION TO JESUS AS VICTIM ON THE ALTAR.

O Jesus, my adorable victim and Saviour, what countless graces and mercies you have bestowed on mankind. You were offered on

the cross to reconcile us to your Father, and you still continue to offer yourself in our holy mysteries as a victim of love; and thus you unceasingly renew the memory of your sacred passion and death, which is the strongest and most authentic evidence of the excess of your love for us.

O hallowed altar of the Lord, how awful and how worthy of respect art thou; we do not see the blood of animals flowing upon thee, but we know that the blood of Jesus is really and truly there, that adorable blood of the Redeemer which purifies us, and becomes the blood of the new and everlasting alliance made with us, the sinful children of Eve. Oh, how many wonders and prodigies present themselves on this altar to the eyes of faith?

O my adorable Jesus, everything in this sacrifice is grand and holy; everything in it preaches your power and boundless love, your grandeur, your humiliations, your sanctity, and your patience. There you present your mysteries to us, there you appear dead, and living to your Father; there you are invested with glory, and, to our eyes, you appear without it; there you are that Son of God to whom the heavens and the earth are subject, and yet you are obedient to the voice of your priest; there you are that divine Word by whom all things were made, and yet you hide yourself in a profound obscurity; there you offer us, who are present at the holy sacrifice, to your Father; and there you are not only a victim but the living bread which strengthens us when we are weak, which comforts us in affliction, and lifts us up from our lowliness and prostration.

On that altar, adorable and loving Redeemer, you are at once the priest and the victim, the alliance and the sign of the alliance of God with man, and there you so unite us to you by the participation of the victim as to make us live your life. From your eternal life our bodies receive a new sanctity and a germ of incorruption and immortality; our souls are enlightened by the greatest of all lights, and they receive from your eternal life a life abundant and overflowing with every heavenly blessing and benediction; and, finally, dear Jesus, you are on our altar the only adorer worthy of your Father, the centre of all our worship, the prop of our Church, and the end of our faith and adoration.

Grant me grace, victim of love and justice, never to enter your temple insensible to your mercies, your grandeurs, and your humiliations in this adorable mystery of the altar; and likewise grant that I may always assist with proper dispositions at the sublime sacrifice of your adorable body and blood. May I always appear there suffused

with tears of penitential regret for having offended you, penetrated with compunction, mortified by a life of penance, and ever ready to be immolated for the glory of God. Alas! when I reflect on how I formerly used to assist at this ever-adorable sacrifice, I feel covered with confusion and shame.

I often assisted at it with distraction and dissipation of spirit, my heart full of self-love and the love of the world, my eyes wandering about, and fixed upon anything but Thee, and my whole demeanour like the pagan or the Jew, and conducting myself as if I were in a worldly assembly. Pardon me, adorable Jesus, those irreverences, and infuse into me the spirit of this sacrifice, so that I may always appear, and really be, as nothingness at the foot of your altar.

Make me a true participator with your priesthood in offering you up to your Father, and make me a victim sufficiently holy to be offered up on your altar with you, in order that I may be so changed and transformed into you that I can offer myself up in the eternal sanctuary hereafter, and mingle amongst the angels encompassing that sublime altar where you manifest yourself as the Lamb put to death from the beginning of the world for the sins of mankind. Amen.

CHAPTER IX.

ON JESUS, OUR REPAIRER.

JESUS was given to us by His Father not only to be the sacrifice and the victim of the Christian religion, but also to repair the evils which the sin of Adam caused in us, and in the whole universe; and hence St. Paul says: "As by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one many shall be made just."[1] Let us imagine mankind and this entire world as a great and beautiful edifice in ruins, and let us imagine as much of it standing as will convince us of its ancient splendour and beauty, and then we will have a very unfinished picture indeed of the havoc caused by Adam's sin. We can scarcely now discern in man any of the traces of the sublime perfection in which he was created, because everything in him is now in confusion and disorder; but Jesus came to repair all this, and in this chapter we will consider Him in the character of repairer, and as we go along we will see the terrible ruin sin has brought

[1] Rom. v. 19.

upon man, and how Jesus has repaired it all; how no other could discharge His office of repairer; and if He still continues to discharge it.

What are the principal disorders sin has caused in man?

In the state of innocence man was filled to overflowing with bodily and intellectual strength, and hence he was not subject to sickness, infirmity, or death, and his will was free from concupiscence; and yet his one sin destroyed and entirely ruined all these invaluable gifts and privileges. His soul is now the abode of ignorance, darkness, and error; his will, compared with what it formerly was, became impotent and unable to do the least good by itself, and is enslaved by a concupiscence which inclines it to evil.

In this state of innocence man was constantly looking up to his Creator; his soul and will cheerfully fixed themselves on everything virtuous and good; his reason was untrammeled, and his heart freely observed and fulfilled all his obligations. But after sin man knew his obligations in a confused manner only, and only fulfilled them by aid which came down from heaven to him; he was powerless to entirely disentangle himself from the rebellions of the flesh against the spirit, nor from the violent attacks which creatures and sensible things made upon his imagination; and hence he was constantly in need of medicinal grace for the cure of his infirmities. His body, which was previously free from miseries, infirmities, sickness, and death, became, after the fall of Adam, a mass of corruption, subject to all kinds of maladies, and threatened by death at every moment. Creatures, who were calculated in the state of innocence to elevate man to his Creator, became now an occasion of sin to him, and instead of continuing subject to him they revolted; and so far from being able to rule them, they in most instances became a source of dread and alarm to him in making an unmitigated war upon him; and thus the beautiful order of innocence was demolished and man was no longer master over creatures, nor over the thoughts of his soul, nor the sallies of his imagination, nor the irregular motions of his body. He sees himself a slave to all his passions, and nearly to all creatures as well, because his senses, his imagination, his inclinations, and, in fact, everything around him, seduces and causes him to fall into error and sin.

How did Jesus repair all the misfortunes caused by sin?

He repaired the disorders of man's soul by withdrawing him from ignorance and error, and He enlightened him by giving him a faith which made him know his duties to God and to his neighbour—a faith which discovers his miseries and his weakness to him, which shows

him the depth of his wounds and the remedies for all his evils, and which directs him how to find out the happiness he seeks after and a knowledge of the truth he had lost. This is why Jesus left us His divine Word, to teach us what to avoid and not to be miserable, and to point out what we are bound to do in order to be happy. If we wish to escape from our state of darkness, we must follow Jesus by imitating the example of His virtues, and hence He says: "He that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life."[1]

Our will was weakened by sin and inclined to evil and the love of sensible things, and Jesus repaired all its disorders by His grace, which enlightens it and which heals and strengthens it to return and attach itself to the true good. Christ diffuses His charity over our hearts, which, says St. Augustine, is its strength and sanctity, just as avarice is its misery and its weakness; and by grace and charity the soul is delivered from the rule and tyranny of concupiscence, and after it is delivered it is defended by them from relapse; and hence St. Paul says: "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace."[2] This is how the liberty of man, which was once enslaved, became enfranchised through Christ; and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "We live unto God through Jesus Christ;"[3] and St. John says: "If, therefore, the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."[4] Jesus delivers us by giving us the love of justice, and after He has established us in justice, He perfects our will by new graces and by other powerful aids, and thus enables us to conquer the assaults of concupiscence which always lives in us.

Jesus repairs the disorders which sin caused in the body, not by delivering it from pain, sickness, infirmity, and death, but by giving us His grace and His love, which will enable us to support with patience, and even with joy, the crosses of this life and even the sorrows of death; and thus we can turn our sufferings to the service of our salvation, and make them supply the penances we are obliged to perform for our sins. Jesus repairs the miseries of our bodies by means of the holy Eucharist, because this sacrament, received with proper dispositions, becomes a germ of incorruption and immortality to them, and Christ Himself has declared so when He said: "He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever, and I will raise him up on the last day."[5] Many of the holy fathers, who formed their opinion of the words of our Redeemer just quoted, have spoken of the

[1] John, viii. 12. [2] Rom. vi. 14. [3] Rom. vi. 11.
[4] John, viii. 36 [5] John, vi. 52, 55.

Eucharistic effects on the body as we have; and when time is no more, He will entirely repair them, and hence St. Paul says to the Philippians: "He will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory."[1]

Jesus has repaired the disorders caused by sin in the order of creatures, not that He made their nature or course any way different from that which God made them in the beginning of the world; but He so arranged them that men no longer regard them as gods, as they formerly used to do. He destroyed their idols which were only creatures, and by an admirable effect of the power of His grace, He withdrew men, for the sake of the just, from the vanity to which, in spite of themselves, they subjected those creatures, by making them subservient to their iniquities and slaves to their passions. This divine Saviour merited grace through His death, to enable man to use those creatures with moderation and according to the intention of their Creator; and He will finish their entire reparation at the end of time, when He will purify this vast universe by fire, which he will then cause to fall, and this fire will renovate the whole face of the earth.

Could any other than Jesus repair the evils inflicted by sin upon the human race?

No power could do so except the all-powerful hand that made man, because man who was a mere vessel of clay, voluntarily fell from the hands which formed him, and was not able by himself to repair his fall and re-adjust the injury he did himself; and hence it was necessary that Jesus should re-establish him with His blood, and thus restore him to his primitive beauty, and re-model him, by investing him in His own sanctity, His justice, and His truth; and this is the reason St. Paul says to the Colossians that man was renewed "by putting on the new man, according to the image of Him who created him."[2] Again, our miseries are so great that they can be repaired only by the grace of Christ because neither the reason of man, with all its lights, nor the Old Law, with all its ceremonies and sacrifices, its sacraments and precepts, its threats and promises, its miracles and prophecies, nor all the creatures on this earth, nor all the angels in heaven, could ever be able to repair the accumulated evils inflicted by sin upon man.

Man's vain and proud reason was too powerless for so enormous a work, and even though it knew a portion of his evils, it never could emancipate him from the part which it knew, because it was so

[1] Philip. iii. 21. [2] Coloss. iii. 10.

blinded by sin as to know only a part of its duties, and so enslaved by its pride and passions as to be absolutely unable to conquer them and deliver itself; and although it could comprehend that the supreme being merited the first place in this world, still it was so obscured by sensible pleasures, that it could never raise itself to the proper contemplation of a real sovereign good.

The law was just as powerless as reason, and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "That no flesh shall be justified by the law, for the law is the knowledge of sin;"[1] but what it was impossible for the law to do, God did by sending His own Son into this world, invested with flesh like to that of sin. The sacrifices and ceremonies of the Old Law were just as impotent as the law itself, because St. Paul says to the Hebrews: "Every priest standeth daily ministering and often offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sin."[2] And hence Jesus, the true Samaritan, was required to infuse the oil of His grace into our wounds in order to heal them. The priests and levites of the Old Law saw the increasing miseries of mankind, and yet they were unable to remedy them; but the Son of God came and united Himself to man, and thus restored to him the grace and strength he had lost.

Creatures were so unable to repair man that they actually contributed to make him more feeble than he was, because after he separated from God, through sin, he fixed his peace and happiness in the enjoyment of those creatures, and instead of finding the peace and happiness which he lost, he became more unhappy, blind, and restless—more corrupt and weak than he had been before, because it is the nature of God's eternal and immutable law, that we must become miserable and unhappy the moment we separate from our sovereign good.

The angels, although blessed spirits, and enriched with so much light and sanctity, could never repair the ruin of man's soul, because they knew not how to be, and never could be, his light and his life, even though they could succour him by their intercession, and because God is the fountain from whom men and angels derive their happiness, and hence they could not communicate to fallen men what they did not possess.

EJACULATION TO JESUS OUR REPAIRER.

I came, dear Jesus, to expose to you the ruin and the miseries of my poor soul, and you became forthwith the repairer of them.

[1] Rom. iii. 20. [2] Heb. x. 11.

You saw them, dear Lord, for my weakness and ignorance could not conceal them; you alone, my adorable Redeemer, are able to raise me up from my degradation, and repair those terrible evils and everything vicious and irregular caused in me by sin.

The Old Law enables me to see my miseries, but it cannot help to cure me, because my blind and feeble reason is powerless to emancipate me from the rule and tyranny of concupiscence and establish me in my true happiness. It is only you, my dear Jesus, that can repair my heart by infusing your charity into it, and making me know and love what I ought to love. Your charity will teach me to submit my will to your empire, and my body to the ruling of my soul, because it is your grace that enlightens my intellect and that purifies and enables me to conquer temptations; which saves me from the powers of darkness, and enables me to give to God, to my neighbour, and to creatures all I owe them. Your sacraments deliver me from my sins and give me a supernatural and divine life; they cure my feebleness and comfort me under tribulations; they raise me up from my prostration, and heal the wounds I inflicted on myself in my intercourse with the world, and hence you are the repairer of all my evils and misfortunes.

Continue, my amiable Jesus, your office of repairer in me, and renovate my interior man. Alas! who am I, and what a crowd of inconsistencies dwell in me? I cannot tell you without sighing and weeping. I can scarcely ever find myself the same man, except in unfaithfulness and ingratitude to you, my only hope and comfort. One day I know the good I ought to do, and soon after I am in darkness. Truth pleases me, and sometimes even touches me, but I find, on account of my extreme misery, that it has not the same attractions at all times. Sometimes I run with joy in the way of your commandments, and at other times I follow them with pain and weariness; sometimes I practise piety with ease and comfort, and at other times I do so with extreme dislike.

To-day I feel how sweet and amiable thou art, and to-morrow I am the very contrary. Sometimes I am the sport of my passions, and yet I cannot see a single one of them ruling me or becoming less dominant. O my Jesus, shall I expose still more to you the miseries of my heart and the havoc sin has made in me? Yes, my Saviour, I shall do so, because you gave me the will to do it. Sometimes your yoke feels sweet and agreeable to me, and at other times it appears heavy and even insupportable. Sometimes the consideration of your creatures carries me up to you, and immediately after they become a subject of temptation and even an occasion of relapse to me.

Sometimes I am in such holy dispositions that no matter what the world says or does to me, I can patiently bear it, and at other times the least word or offence makes me bitter and impatient. Sometimes retirement is holy and delightful to me, and at other times it makes me so dissipated that I am unable to re-enter into myself or fix my heart upon anything solid. Sometimes silence, solitude, and penance have the greatest attractions for me, but soon all these happy feelings vanish, and I can think no more of them.

Repair, dear Jesus, this ruin in my soul, restore its ancient strength and beauty, make it constant in loving you and doing good, give it back all the treasures it lost, establish it in the practice of virtue, and make it perfect in every way. But, alas! I know it, and faith teaches that my entire reparation cannot be entirely accomplished here below, but only in the life to come, when my soul shall be united to you, and when it shall be entirely absorbed in the splendours of your majesty, it will then begin to live in your life and be happy in your happiness.

When my body shall have risen glorious and immortal, it will find in you all it lost in Adam; then I shall never again experience the rebellions of the flesh against the spirit; then you will be the perfect life of my soul, the eternal light of my intellect, and the entire renovation of my frail flesh; and then I shall see a new heaven and a new earth, neither of which shall be an occasion of scandal or relapse to me. Amen.

CHAPTER X.

ON JESUS, THE MODEL OF CHRISTIANS.

God sent His divine Son into this world and gave Him to man, not only to believe in Him in order to be saved, but as a model of the kind of life men are bound to lead. If man continued in the state of innocence, he would contemplate God with happiness and delight, he would study Him in His divine attributes, and would perfectly conform his will to that of his supreme King; and hence he would have no need of a model for the regulation of his conduct. Man could not contemplate his God with the same facility after the fall of Adam as before, because he became so earthly that he lost nearly all knowledge of his sovereign Master; and yet Christ says to him: "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect;"[1] and St. Paul says to the Ephesians: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as most dear

[1] Matt. v. 48.

children;"[1] and St. Peter says: "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation, as He who has called you is holy."[2] But how can we be imitators of God? We can if we imitate Jesus, because we find in Him a God who does not dwell in light inaccessible, but who made Himself visible by coming on earth, and who spoke, acted, and suffered like other men.

On what is the obligation of imitating Jesus founded?

It is founded on the design which God had in giving us His Son, and on the authority of the gospel and the apostles, and on the character of Christians which we bear.

The design God had in view when giving us His divine Son was that He should not only satisfy for our sins and be our Mediator, but He had chosen Him before the creation of the world to make us saints and spotless in His presence. God wished us to be saved through Jesus in order to be united to Him, because it is certain that no one can be saved but he who makes only one man with Jesus, and consequently none can be saved except those who live by His spirit and His life, and are members of the same body with Him, all of which necessarily imply a conformity and resemblance of feeling and disposition to Jesus in everything connected with our salvation. This is why St. Paul says to the Romans: "For whom He foreknew He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son;"[3] and hence this conformity must exist in all who are to be saved, no matter what their state or condition of life may be; and all in whom this conformity shall not appear, He will say to them: "Depart from me, I know you not."[4] It is befitting that this incarnate Word should be the model which man ought to follow in order to arrive to Him by following Him as his model, as he came from Him as his beginning, and tends to Him as his last end. The prophet Isaias foretold that Christ would be our model when he said: "In that day the root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of peoples, Him the Gentiles shall beseech, and His sepulchre shall be glorious,"[5] and hence He will be so conspicuous, that they can see in Him the life they ought to lead.

This obligation of taking Jesus as our model is established on the authority of Christ Himself and of His apostles, when He says: "If any man will come to me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."[6] In this text He commands us to do three things. 1st. To renounce our self-will, and submit it to the teachings

[1] Ephes. v. 1. [2] 1 Ep. i. 15. [3] Rom. viii. 29.
[4] Matt. vii. 23. [5] Isaias, xi. 10. [6] Matt. xvi. 24.

of faith; to renounce it in order to follow His will; and to live according to the rules of the gospel by giving up our passions and irregular desires.

2nd. He commands us to carry our cross every day, that is to do violence to ourselves by mortifications, and by bearing patiently all the evils of this life, and by walking courageously in the painful and thorny way of the cross.

3rd. He commands us to follow Him by imitating the example of His virtues, by adopting Him as our model, and by conforming our lives to His. But "how," says St. Bernard, "could we follow Him who appeared as a giant, and ran on with such incredible swiftness that He descended from heaven into the womb of a virgin, from that to the crib, from the crib to the cross, from the cross to the sepulchre, and from the sepulchre back again to heaven?" We should follow Him through all those phases of His life by conforming ourselves to His dispositions, and imitating the virtues He made so manifest in His mysteries. This is the doctrine taught by St. Augustine, who says he learned it from St. Paul, who taught in all his epistles that a Christian should demonstrate in His conduct the life and mysteries of Jesus. He tells us also that we ought to be dead and buried with Christ; and as He died no more after He had risen, so we should walk in a new life and be dead to sin, and live only for God here in order to be with Him hereafter in heaven. After St. Paul described the mysteries of Christ's death and resurrection, he says that we ought to be with Him in heaven by despising the things of this world, and hoping for the goods of eternal life.

If we consider with the eyes of faith all the other mysteries of this God made man, and all the apostles taught concerning them, we will see that we should manifest in our lives all the characteristics of them. The incarnation, wherein God annihilated Himself by becoming man, teaches us that we ought to humble and annihilate ourselves, no matter how high and exalted we are in the eyes of the world. The birth of Christ, Son of God and of the Virgin Mary, teaches us to live and conduct ourselves in every respect as the children of God. The crib and the stable where this divine Saviour was born cry out to us to detach ourselves from the vanities of this world, and to fly from its pride and pomp. The circumcision teaches us to circumcise our hearts, by cutting out of them all wicked desires, all useless words and actions, and everything superfluous in our conduct, and then to live and die crucified with Jesus. All that our Redeemer taught, and the apostles preached, tend only to make us conformable to Him as our chief, our master, our father, and our model.

The apostles announced to us the obligation of putting off the old man, and taking up the new man instead, to conduct ourselves according to the spirit of Jesus, to follow in His footsteps, to destroy the stronghold of our passions, never to conform to the spirit of the world, to carry upon us the image of the celestial man, to be just according to His justice, to be saints after the model of His sanctity, and that the Father should see His Son reflected in us if we desire to be numbered amongst His children.

All these truths, so well established by the apostles and by the writings of the holy fathers, tell us that we must not regard this conformity to the life and example of Jesus as mere counsel or an indifferent thing, because it is a revealed truth and well-established precept which we are bound to believe. There is no salvation without this conformity, without it we are eternally excluded from the kingdom of heaven, and separated from the God of all sanctity; and at the hour of death, and when we will stand before His judgment-seat, God will search for this conformity in us. He will seek for the spirit of His Son in our spirit, for His feelings and dispositions in our hearts, and for His life in our lives; and if we were to die just now, could Jesus find this conformity in us? Alas! scarcely could this divine model know us, so ignorant are we of the life He has led, because we did not wish to learn or to know it.

How many pious persons are filled with pride at seeing others covered with defects, because they believe themselves clothed with every virtue and abounding in perfection, because they do not see in themselves the crimes they behold in others. But we would cure this temptation to vanity if we compared ourselves with Jesus, and if we examine our life and dispositions according to this divine model, we will find how very far we are from what we ought to be, and that, consequently, in place of considering ourselves perfect, we will see that we have scarcely begun a Christian life, which is the life of Jesus.

The obligation of conformity to Christ is derived from the character of Christian which we bear, and which we received at our baptism, because the name Christian originates from Christ our chief, and hence we should not bear it fictitiously, but in its fullest signification. To be a Christian is to profess Christ, and to follow His maxims, to love all He loves, and to despise all He condemns; and hence the holy fathers say that a Christian should be another Christ. Our name is derived from His, and hence we should make it appear that we are truly His by the conformity of our lives to His life, that we are His good odour in every way, and that we carry on all occasions

and everywhere with us His maxims and the example of His virtues. As every Christian is a participator in the divine nature, he is obliged, on account of this special grace, to express in his conduct the life of Jesus, and this is why we received the holy baptism, and, as St. Paul says, "that we were invested with Jesus." We have taken Him as our model, says the Council of Constantinople, and after having renounced the world and the devil, we professed to follow Him, and never more to serve them.

We should bear well in mind, and strive to know all about that grace which made us Christians, and we should never forget that it was communicated to us by our Redeemer and our chief, that we received it from His plenitude, that when it comes to us and diffuses itself in us it circulates His life and dispositions within us also. This grace unites us to Him as His members, and makes one with Him, and hence we are obliged to do all we can to live like Him.

What is a Christian?

He is a man who glories in following the doctrine of Christ, and this doctrine of Christ embraces not only what He taught but what He preached here on earth. Therefore, if we wish to follow His doctrine, we must imitate His life, and practise like Him this doctrine; and when we do so we will be living in conformity to Him. Finally, we are bound as Christians to love Jesus; and, according to St. Augustine, "the effect of love is to become like the object loved, such as when we love this earth we become earthly, so when we love Jesus we become like to Him." We become holy from His sanctity, and, in a certain sense, another Christ; and the more this love increases, the more we become like Him, because then we are becoming more united to Him, and hence we should never lose sight of this dearest object of our love.

When we wish to impress Jesus upon our hearts, we should do as painters do, who keep the appearance of the person whose likeness they wish to place on the canvas always before their mind, in order not to omit a single lineament of the original. So, too, should the Christian do who wants to make his heart conformable to Jesus, and to fix upon it the true likeness of His life. All our words and actions, all our desires, dispositions, and sufferings are so many touches of the pencil, which form and express some trait of Jesus within us. This should be the labour of our life, and very happy should we be if we had accomplished it even at death, in order that God may discover in us, when departing from this world, the likeness of His Son and the only object of His love.

What consequences are we to draw from these truths?

We should struggle never to conform in the smallest way to this world, which we renounced at our baptism, and which the Son of God cursed on account of its scandals. We can be in the world, and yet not to belong to it; but we ought to be in it like Jesus, who condemned its maxims by His doctrine and by the example of His life; and hence God says to us what He formerly said to the Jewish people: "When you dwell amongst the nations, do not imitate them;"[1] but they were not exact in following this advice, and holy David says that "having mixed amongst strange people, they followed their evil conduct."[2] God commands us not to follow the example of worldlings, and yet the most part of Christians believe that this command is not binding, because such is the power of bad example that it forces its way everywhere; it insinuates itself into the best-regulated consciences, and seduces thousands every day under its influence.

Jesus is the only and perfect example for us to follow, because He alone is perfectly exempt from every defect, and possesses perfection in all the virtues; but this cannot be found in the world, because all in it are subjects of sin and incontenance. The second consequence following from this truth is, that no man, however holy and perfect, can be a model for Christians, except in so far as he can become so by imitating Jesus, the model of all men; and hence St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ."[3] This great apostle knew that he had many frailties and defects which debarred him from the privilege of perfection, and hence he wished to be imitated in so far as he had imitated Christ, in whom the least imperfection could not be found, and in whose sanctity there could not be the least change or alteration. The greatest saints have had their defects, because none of them, except the Mother of God, was exempt from sin, and hence none of them could be perfect models; and therefore no one could follow them as such, except inasmuch as they were conformable to and followed Jesus. The interior life of Christ, at least, is suitable to all men, no matter what their state or position may be; and this cannot be said of any other man, no matter how holy he may have been, and therefore we must conclude that it is an undoubted truth and a well-established precept, preached by the apostles and taught by Christ, that we must follow Jesus as our model, and imitate the example of charity, patience, obedience, self-denial, humility, resignation, and other virtues He has given us; and hence St. Augustine says: "Jesus has suffered for us;"

[1] Deut. xii. 30. [2] Psalms, cv. 35. [3] 1 Cor. xi. 1.

and St. Peter says: "He has left us an example to walk in His footsteps."[1]

In what way ought we to follow Christ as our model, and in what things ought we to imitate Him in order to be of the number of His disciples?

All Christians should regulate their interior life according to that of Jesus, and never to fix a limit to their conformity with Him, in order to establish Him surely within them. To effect all this, St. Paul laboured, preached, and suffered; and this is the reason he wrote to the Galatians, saying: "My little children of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you."[2] Why do you believe that our holy mother the Church carries us in her bosom, rears us up with tender care, instructs us with so much trouble, feeds us with the milk of the divine Word and the grace of the sacraments, and gives us, when we are strong enough, the solid meat of the body of the Lord? She does all this to form Jesus in us, and when He is formed in us she wants us to advance in grace till we arrive at the state of perfection, when the eternal Father sees in us the image of the celestial man which is impressed on our interior. And we will have him impressed there when our reason shall begin to judge all things as Jesus judges them, when we desire only what He desires, when we love only what He loves, and when we possess only the same feelings and dispositions that He possesses.

How should our reason judge all things so that our judgment may be conformable to Jesus?

When we judge the goods of this world and the evils of this life—of riches and poverty, of honour and humiliations, of vice and virtue, of God and creatures, as Jesus judges them. Therefore, according to His example, we should regard the things of this life as vile and contemptible, as unworthy the love of God's children, and only as the works of His omnipotence; and we ought to consider the evils of this life as so many punishments due to our sins, and as so many means to satisfy the justice of God, and to detach us from the vanities and pleasures of this world. We should look on those evils as very trifling indeed, compared with the everlasting sorrows with which God threatens us, and which He is solicitous we would fear in order to avoid them. We must regard those evils as very small and trivial afflictions compared with the immense weight of glory they gain for us, and because they help so much to make us conformable to Jesus Christ. We should regard riches as a good to be used for our

[1] 1 Ep. ii. 21. [2] Gal. iv. 19.

necessities and for the relief of the poor, and never to gratify our passions; we should regard them as an obstacle to salvation, and honor and rank as things to be avoided, and we should look upon poverty and humiliations as so many blessings and so much happiness.

Christ preferred a life of suffering and humiliation to one of ease and tranquillity, which He could have easily adopted. Let us, after His example, judge of virtue and salvation as He judged them; let us seek the goods of eternal life which we should prefer to all the riches of this world; let us regard sin as the only evil to be feared, and which alone can make us unhappy, and let us estimate its enormity by all that Jesus did and suffered to expiate it. We should always entertain the highest ideas and the loftiest sentiments for our God; we should regard Him as a being infinitely perfect, wise, powerful, holy, just, and merciful; as a being immutable, eternal, and immense, who knows all things and can do whatever he wishes; whose power cannot be resisted, who is King of kings and Lord of lords; who can overturn kingdoms and demolish empires just as He desires; who holds all creatures in His hands, who excites the tempests and the storms, and tranquillizes them when He chooses; who hold the keys of life and death, and disposes of all things according to His eternal and immutable designs, and who uses creatures to comfort or to punish whom He wishes.

Let us regard this Being so grand and so full of majesty, who fills this whole world, and before whom all creation is as a grain of sand and as nothing, let us regard Him as our sovereign good, to whom we should pay an infinite adoration, a perfect love, obedience, and submission; to whom we should direct all our being and all our actions, on whom we can depend and rest with confidence and security, whom we can never respect and love sufficiently, and to whom we can never manifest sufficient gratitude and acknowledgment. We should also regard creatures as His works, as the instruments of His power, as so many dangerous snares made use of by the devil to capture and to ruin us, as so many ornaments of this universe which is the temple of God, and, finally, as a means to elevate us to a knowledge of His supreme majesty, and consquently as a means to excite us to praise and love Him as their Creator.

What are the things we should desire which would be conformable to the desires of Jesus?

We ought to desire to do like Jesus the will of our heavenly Father, to seek His glory only in all things, and to renounce the desires of the world and the flesh. All our desires should be noble

and exalted, and our only ambition should be to gain an eternal kingdom, to possess those grand and infinite goods which we can never lose, to yearn after eternal bliss, and to be happy in the same happiness as God. The great object of our desires ought to be the salvation of our souls, the acquisition of virtue, a hidden life, the cross, humiliations, and perfection. We should hunger and thirst after justice, and ardently desire to go forth from this world to God; we should desire to be delivered from this tenement of clay, that the reign of Christ may be everywhere established, that His entire mystic body may be formed, and that God may be adored, served, known, loved, and honoured by mankind; and, finally, all our desires should tend to God as their only end and object, so that we can cry out with holy David: "What have I in heaven, and besides thee what do I desire upon earth."[1]

How should our love be conformable to that of Jesus?

When we love only what He loves, and in the same manner that he loves, and hence we should learn from Him to love God with our whole hearts, and our whole souls, and all our powers; and as the love of Jesus for His Father was boundless and undivided, so should ours also be, if possible. As God is the centre and the end to which all the motions of our souls should tend, we should direct, like Jesus, all our desires, all the affections of our hearts, and all the actions of our lives to Him; and this is what Jesus wished to convey on the eve of His death, when He addressed those admirable words to His Father, saying: "Keep them in thy name whom thou hast given to me, that they may be one as we are;"[2] and again: "I have made known thy name to them, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them also."[3] Jesus asks here from His Father that we may have the same love which His Father had for Him; and what blessing so grand, so holy, so immense, could He ask for us? He made this demand for us, because He wished to be in us, to act in us, and to fill us with His love for His Father. Jesus taught us by His example to love God and to love our neighbour as He loves them, and hence He said: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I loved you."[4] Who could comprehend the holy, the disinterested, and boundless love which Jesus has for us; and yet He commands us to love each other with the same love. Behold all this divine Saviour said, and did, and suffered to make us understand how much He loves us; and, what is most inconceivable, that after He commands us to love one another as He loved us, He says that He loves us as His Father

[1] Psalms, lxxii. 25. [2] John, xvii. 11. [3] John, xvii. 26. [4] John, xv. 12.

loves Him. Oh, love of the Father for Jesus His Son; oh, love of the Son for men, and model of that love which we should have for our neighbour, to what dost thou bind us? If I fear that I do too much for my neighbour in the shape of instruction and securing his salvation, I am erroneous, because I must be disposed to give all my goods, and even sacrifice my life for him, if God should demand them from me.

Like this divine Saviour, we must love our enemies, and mankind in general, because either they are good and just, or they are not; and if they are not, we must love them to make them so. We ought to compassionate all sinners, and, when we can, we ought to pray for and help them to come away from their sinful state, and, like Jesus, we ought to pardon them from our hearts the affronts and injuries they did us, and we should be disposed to do all the good we can for them. We should not offend, in any shape, against holy charity—by our habits or by our language—and we should not quickly judge or condemn another; but we ought to excuse, to tolerate, and to suffer all and do all we can to preserve peace, and to live in union of spirit with our neighbour. Our love will be conformable to that of Jesus if we love all creatures in connection with God because Jesus loves them, and because He hates nothing that He made. Jesus hates sin alone, and we, like Him, should hate it, and in the same way that He hates it, because we ought to love Him, whom sin offends, with the same love with which He loves us, and this is why He has given us His spirit and infused His charity into our hearts, in order to correct and fix in spiritual order all our human and earthly loves.

In what way should our internal dispositions and feelings be conformable to those of Jesus? It is true that all Christians are not bound to live in such external poverty as Jesus did, because they are not bound to die on the cross, nor to become the sport and laughing-stock of their enemies, as He did; but all are bound to have His internal dispositions, and hence St. Paul says to the Philippians: "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus."[1] Therefore, you must labour to have the same feelings of charity and humility, and for sacrifice and adversities, and the same dispositions for patience, for sweetness, and all other virtues that He had. We should be disposed to have only a manger, like Him, for our bed, to be reduced to beggary, not to have whereon to lay our heads, to die on the cross, and to be, like Him, the butt for every insult and out-

[1] Philip. ii. 5.

rage rather than violate the least of His commandments, or in any way forsake the truth.

God should see these dispositions not only in priests, in religious, and those who are living in solitude, but He ought to see them in all men—in kings and their subjects, in the great and the low, in the rich and the poor; because Jesus is the model for all, He is their chief, and they ought to be His members; and He became man for the rich, the learned, and the great, as well as for the poor, the illiterate, and the lowly. He regenerated all through the sacraments, and announced only one gospel to be the rule and road to heaven for all without exception. He prepared the same mysteries and instituted the same sacraments for the rich and the poor, for those living in solitude and those in the world; and hence St. Paul says that all, without distinction of quality or rank, must be conformable to the image of Christ; and this conformity must not be evanescent, but permanent, firm, constant, and unchanged. We cannot be crucified and buried with Christ unless we carry in our bosoms the dispositions to be so; we can wear, if we wish, the raiment of Esau, but under this exterior God must hear the voice of Jacob, that is of Jesus His Son. The spirit of Jesus must be in our hearts, and must act and operate within us, and we must not flatter ourselves with having an internal conformity to Jesus if some reflection of it do not appear in our external conduct also.

How can we imitate the exterior life of Jesus?

We must suppose the principle of St. Paul, which says: "The life of Jesus must be made manifest in our bodies;"[1] and that the whole life of Jesus revolved on the four great virtues of humility, poverty, mortification, and penance, which He principally practised. If we suppose those things, it follows that it should appear in our exterior that we are poor, humble, and crucified like the disciples and children of Christ, and that we ought to honour His exterior life by bearing on our conduct the marks of His poverty, His humility, and His mortifications. How can we know His disciples? Shall it be from the luxury of their lives and the pomp and costly splendour of their furniture and retinue? Shall it be from their expensive amusements, in which they lavish in prodigality what should be given to the poor? Shall it be from their gorgeous spectacles and grand entertainments, or from their excesses in eating and drinking? Do those Christians honour the exterior life of Christ by their vengeful spirit, their impurities, their insatiable avarice, and their mundane

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 10.

and effeminate conduct? Certainly they do not, for such dissipations as these represent the lives of the pagan gods, and not the holy life of Jesus. We must never forget that every thought, word, and deed of ours must have in it either the spirit of the new man or of the old man—the spirit of Jesus or the corrupt and ruined spirit of Adam. If we rule our exterior according to the spirit of the old man of sin, we become criminal and corrupt like him; but if by the spirit of the new man of God, all our interior and exterior shall be holy and conformable to the life of Jesus. The poor should take care lest they possess the exterior only of their divine model; and the rich should tremble if they imagine that they can possess the interior without the exterior, because we must possess both if we wish to live as true Christians and to be conformable to Christ.

If we would read the conversations and review the actions of our Redeemer in the gospel, we would see as we go along how peacefully and patiently He conducted Himself, and what a spirit of recollection and presence of mind shone out in His exterior. Behold the modesty of His looks, the wisdom of His words, and the circumspection and reserve of His manners. He gave no pain to anyone, and He bore the defects of all with whom He came in contact with an unfeigned forbearance and meekness. He was always ready to do good to all, without any dissimulation or disguise. He was obedient in all things to the will of His Father, and was never suspected of seeking His own glory; and at last He suffered and died in peace through an excess of love for His Father and for the redemption of mankind. Let us learn from this grand model how to act and how to suffer, how to speak, to live, and to die like Him, if we wish to reign eternally with Him in heaven. Amen.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, MODEL OF CHRISTIANS.

O divine Jesus, model of Christians, if I wish to live as a true Christian and to be of the number of the predestined, I must imitate you; but, dear Lord, when I examine my interior and exterior life, I find in them very little to resemble you. I have been created to the image and likeness of your Father, and sin destroyed this likeness in me, and you reformed me on the model of your likeness by the operation of your grace.

I carry upon me the impress of your spirit, and you impressed yourself on my soul by baptism, and now I carry your image in order

to live according to it. But, my loving Lord, you know how I became like the irrational animal by my sins, and how I effaced the primitive beauty from my soul which you imparted to it at my baptism. I did not value at their proper price the great blessings I received from you, nor did I sufficiently appreciate the glory to which you exalted me. I lost all the goods you gave me, and effaced from my soul all the virtues you engraved upon it.

Prostrate at your feet, I come with tears of true penitential regret, to ask you to restore my first beauty to me and to make me entirely conformable to you by the application of your merits and a participation of your virtues. It is true I am not God like you, but I ought to be so united to you and to conduct myself so fully worthy of you, as to become only one man with you. I cannot be eternal like you, but I ought to love and serve God with eternal love as you do. I cannot be immense like you, but I ought to honour and respect God everywhere—in His churches, in the world, and in solitude, labour, and repose. I cannot be omnipotent like you, but by the power of your grace I should be able to subdue my passions, to conquer the devil, and to triumph as you did over all that the world holds grand and agreeable.

I cannot be immutable like you, but I ought to be firm and constant in the practice of virtue, and not like a reed tossed about by the winds as I am now—one day with God and another with the world. I cannot be good and merciful as you are, but I ought to imitate both in you, by having compassion for the sinner, by forgiving with a good heart the injuries done to me, and by relieving the necessities of the poor according to my means. I cannot be perfectly just like you, but I should strive to be so, and to give to everyone his own. I should imitate your sanctity by endeavouring to be irreprehensible in every respect, by flying from the corruptions of this world, by avoiding sin and combating my passions, by practising virtue, and entering into your sentiments and dispositions, in order to be holy of your holiness.

Alas! my Jesus, the more I reflect upon myself and upon you, the more I feel troubled and full of fear, because you had always an extreme love for the cross and for all kinds of humiliations, and I feel a great dislike and repugnance for them. The shadow of the cross makes me fear and tremble, and all my nature rebels at the approach of humiliations. I hate to receive and bear them with patience and submission, much less to love them.

O my divine Jesus, I can find nothing in you but the spirit of

sacrifice, prayer, adoration, and death to all things; and in myself I find an accumulation of self-love, dissipation, and a general neglect of my duties. Ah, my Saviour, what shall I do at death when you will seek for your thoughts in my thoughts, for your desires in my desires, for your spirit in my spirit, for your heart in my heart, for your actions and conduct in my conduct, for your whole life in my life, and yourself in me?

I fear, my dear Jesus, that you will not find yourself in me at that solemn hour, and I fear that you will find all that is earthly instead of yourself; and I fear likewise that when the crucifix is presented to me in my last agony, it will fill me with shame and confusion instead of comfort and consolation. Oh, what an inmeasurable disproportion there is between my life and that of a crucified God, annihilated and obedient to death, even to the death of the cross. O my Jesus, create yourself within me by destroying my self-love and everything worldly you may see there, in order that I may never again conform myself to a world that hates you, and that I may never again follow the foolish wanderings of my spirit, nor the example and counsel of sinners. I should always follow after you, my dear Jesus, and walk in the narrow way of the gospel, and in you I should increase until you are found in the fulness of your perfections in me.

Efface, dear Lord, the likeness of the earthly man abiding in me, that I may through your grace bring your spirit, your life, and your dispositions into my soul and body, both of which have borne so long the image of the beast. All I ask, my most amiable Saviour, is that you will expel the old man of sin from me, that I may be conformed into such a union with you as to make one new man, one Jesus with you, and that your Father will find me at the hour of death in entire conformity to you. Amen.

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Are all Christians obliged to imitate Jesus?

They are, no matter what rank, state, or condition of life they may hold, because He is the model for all, because all states and conditions are united in Him, and because His providence fixes each of us in the position he pleases, in order that each may enter into his sentiments and dispositions. As God engraved some traits of His divinity upon all His creatures, so, too, Jesus wishes that all

Christians should be participators in the characteristics of His divine life, and hence that bishops and priests should partake of His priesthood, kings of His royalty, and the great of this world of His power and authority.

He wishes that fathers and mothers should represent His paternity, children His infancy, the married His character as spouse of the Church, masters His authority, servants His obedience, and the poor His poverty. He wishes that virgins should imitate and represent His virginity, solitaries His hidden life, the hard-worked His laborious life, and the persecuted the sufferings which His enemies and the world stirred up and inflicted upon Him; and hence St. Paul says to the Colossians: "It hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell in Him"[1]—that is, the fulness of power, of virtue, and of all other gifts and graces.

I.—ON JESUS CHRIST, THE MODEL OF KINGS AND PRINCES.

How should kings and princes of this world imitate Jesus?

Although Jesus did not appear in the pomp and splendour of an earthly king, still He was the King of kings. The Jews gave him that title and He had taken it Himself, and St. John says in the Apocalypse that he saw Him seated upon the throne of David, His Father, and wearing on His garments the grand title of "King of kings and Lord of lords."[2] In this character He exercised His authority to destroy the kingdom of Satan, and to establish in its stead the kingdom of God; and hence kings and princes should employ their power and authority in the same way, and regard themselves as so many deputies under Christ, whom they should respect as their sovereign and their God, to whom they should pay homage by submitting to Him and obeying His laws, remembering that they are always in the presence of this immortal and invisible King of ages, and that they have no power but what they received from Him.

They ought to employ their power like Jesus in humbling the dominion of Satan, destroying his power upon earth, and spreading in their kingdoms the reign of Christ and the rule of His gospel. Although earthly kings are allowed to have huge armies and an external pomp befitting their station, and distinguishing them from their subjects, they ought not on that account to be less humble and detached from their riches and exalted station. Like Jesus, they ought to rule their subjects according to the rules of sovereign wisdom and

[1] Coloss. i. 19. [2] Apoc. xix. 16.

immutable justice. Like Jesus, they ought to defend their subjects from their enemies, to protect the innocent, to advocate the cause of the oppressed, never to allow the praises or flatteries of those around them to turn them away from the path of truth and justice; to hear, and kindly entertain, all the complaints presented to them, and to compassionate the miseries and to do justice to all.

They should exercise their authority like Jesus, by suppressing and rooting out the disorders prevailing in their kingdoms; and, finally, if kings desire to reign as true Christians, they should strive to reign justly and according to the language of eternal wisdom which says: "By Me kings reign, and law-givers decree just things."[1]

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE MODEL OF KINGS.

O Jesus, sovereign King of the universe, who hast received all power and authority in heaven and upon earth, grant, through your grace and mercy, that all kings and princes may exercise their authority as you exercised yours. Grant them a little of that divine wisdom with which you regulated your princely conduct, and make them fathers as well as sovereigns over their subjects. Make them always remember that they are consecrated in a holy alliance with justice, mercy, power, and kindness, according to the necessities of their subjects, and in accordance with the wants of their kingdoms, that they may merit to make you reign in the souls of their subjects.

Keep them in mind that they are the mere ministers of the living God to punish the wicked and reward the good, and that authority was not given them for the indulgence of their passions, but to establish peace, happiness, and tranquillity in their kingdoms. Make them humble in their exaltation, poor in spirit in the midst of abundance, mortified in the midst of so many pleasures, submissive to your authority as the sovereign Lord of all who obey them.

Grant that they may always fear and respect your power and grandeur, and that the pomp and worldly glory encompassing them may not blind them to their obligations to you, to themselves, and to their people. Grant, dear Lord, that they may protect the innocent against the violence and injustice of the wicked, and that all their subjects may find them rulers according to your just and adorable heart. Grant them a true love for the gospel and for religion, that they may be able to defend and protect both from the machinations and assaults of their enemies. Kindle your light in them, that they

[1] Psalms, viii. 15.

may never sanction or enact any unjust law, invest them with your holy spirit, and do not permit them to be prejudiced or vindictive.

Preserve them, O Lord, from that crowd of sycophants which generally infest their thrones, for the purpose of approving and applauding their evil tendencies and bad passions, in order to gratify their own sordid and interested desires. Give them disinterested, unselfish, and enlightened ministers to aid them to govern with justice the people committed to their rule. Animate them, dear Lord, with your zeal to remedy public scandals, and to destroy abuses and all other deeds opposed to the Christian religion; so that, after having ruled and governed their subjects according to your wishes, they may securely pass from their earthly kingdom to that of eternal glory. Amen.

II.—ON JESUS CHRIST, THE MODEL OF PRIESTS AND PASTORS.

How should priests and pastors imitate Jesus?

Jesus is the sovereign pontiff of the glories to come, the bishop over all souls, the high priest and sacrificer of the New Law. It is necessary to be called by God, like Him, and not by man, to the elevated dignity of the priesthood. Priests and pastors should be holy without stain, and separated from sinners like Him. They should be more humble and detached from the things of this world than their flocks, as He was. They ought to be distinguished by the sanctity and retirement of their lives, and not by ostentation, pomp, and riches.

Like Jesus, they ought to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, and like Him they ought to carry the sins of their people by doing penance for them, and never participating in their vices and corruptions. Like Jesus, they ought to be priests and victims at the same time, and always disposed to sacrifice their property, their repose, their health, and even their life for the salvation of those committed to their care. Like Him, they should never seek after ecclesiastical or temporal distinctions, but to live hidden and in the lowest place till they shall be commanded to ascend higher; and those priests who have the special care of souls should devote their undivided attention to them, so that a single one of the flock they received from the chief shepherd, Jesus Christ, shall not go astray or be lost.

Like Jesus, they should instruct the souls committed to their care in the true ways of salvation, and they should impart such instruction to them as is necessary for their wants and adapted to their state

and condition of life. Like Jesus, they should care the rich and the poor with the same zeal and affection; they should labour unceasingly for the conversion of sinners, teaching and receiving them with the same charity that Christ always manifested for them. Like Jesus, they should labour in the consummation of the saints, to cheer and sustain those who are weak in piety, to comfort the afflicted, to dissipate their despondencies, to aid them in their sorrow, to bear the chief weight of their miseries, and never to forsake them in adversity, sickness, or death; and, finally, truth and charity should be the rule of their lives and conduct, just as they were the grand attributes of the life and conduct of Jesus, their model.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, MODEL OF PRIESTS AND PASTORS.

O Jesus, high priest of the New Law, and model of priests and pastors, grant, through your holy grace, that all priests invested with your priesthood may ennoble the dignity of their exalted office by the sanctity of their lives, and that, like you, they may do honour to their ministry by a life of poverty, mortification, humility, and penance. Make them know and always feel that they are men of God, your ministers, and dispensers of your mysteries, and hence that they should never pander to the passions of the wicked and the great, but should be as irreproachable in their position as they are exalted above the people.

Grant them, dear Jesus, the zeal, the charity, the patience, and the meekness you had whilst labouring here on earth for the salvation of souls. Clothe them with the virtues and power of your spirit, that they may be able to bear the frailties of the souls committed to their care, and thus conduct them to you liberated from their weaknesses and themselves. Grant them a full knowledge of their obligations and an ardent love of truth, that they may bring men to you according to the immutable rules of the gospel; teach them the various ways by which you conduct souls to your Father, and tear away from their bosom all affection for avarice, envy, and ambition, that each may labour cheerfully in that part of your vineyard allotted to him.

Grant that they may search, with sighs and tears, after all those who have strayed away from them; that they may be able to make the wavering firm, the weak strong, the fallen upright, and the imperfect just holy and perfect; grant them zeal to enliven the hope and confidence of the timid and the pusillanimous, and to teach wisdom and spiritual progress to the perfect.

Grant that they may always administer milk to the little ones, solid food to the strong, and to be all to all to gain all to you; and, finally, grant that, like you, they may be the light of the world, the salt of the earth, true pastors and not drones in your sheepfold; and further grant that they may be fathers and victims to your people, and not idle and neglectful shepherds of the souls committed to their care; that they may always remember at the altar, as you have on the cross, that they are priests of the living God, and discharging the office of mediator between God and man; that they may never descend from this hallowed place, nor depart from your sanctuary unfilled with your holy spirit and love, and entirely dead to this world. Grant that they may never enter the tribunal of penance but to demolish and entirely destroy the sins of the people, and not to be infected or seduced by them, and that they may labour for the consummation of the saints and for the edification of your mystic body.

May they never depart from this awful tribunal unmoved to compassion for the maladies of sinful man, and still more animated for the salvation of souls. Whenever they appear in your pulpit or on your altar, may it always be to announce no other doctrine than the gospel of peace and salvation. Grant that they may always speak and teach what they learned from God at holy prayer and the study of the lives of the saints; that they may practise the virtues they teach to others, so that they can walk in the paths of truth and justice here, and, having fulfilled with holy zeal the functions of their ministry, they may be eternally united to you in heaven, the sovereign high priest and bishop of our souls. Amen.

III.—ON JESUS, THE MODEL OF PERSONS ENGAGED IN THE WORLD.

How can persons engaged in the world follow the example of Jesus? Jesus lived on this earth to teach us how to live on it, and that we should be occupied only in the affairs of our heavenly Father—in seeking His glory, the sanctification of our souls, and the kingdom of God. To this object all our desires, yearnings, and aspirations should tend, no matter what our state or condition of life may be. We ought to live in this world as if we were not in it; we should not so attach or conform ourselves to it as to make a sinful use of its creatures; we should live as strangers in it, and regard ourselves as unfortunate to be obliged to dwell amongst its sinful people; we should always sigh and be troubled at all the crimes we see committed in it, and we should separate ourselves from time to time from its din

and bustle, to devote that time to solitude, prayer, and the examination of our conscience.

We must regard ourselves in this world as in an enemy's country, where we must observe a constant vigilance, if we wish to avoid its false maxims and to escape being surprised by our enemies; where we must fight unceasingly and walk with the greatest circumspection, as if on a very slippery and insecure road, bordered on each side with precipices. We must live in this world as if we were already in heaven; we must feel happy when it hates and persecutes us, we must carry our cross every day, and constantly deny ourselves, in order to make ourselves conformable to our divine model, and to live in this world as He lived in it.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, MODEL OF PERSONS LIVING IN THIS WORLD.

Grant, O my adorable Jesus, that we may live in this world unsullied by its crimes and corruptions, as you did; that we may regard it and all the goods and advantages we possess as nothing, as an unsubstantial shadow, or as a puff of smoke that quickly passes away, and that our only concern may be to make a treasure for heaven, and to sanctify ourselves by penance and the mortification of our passions.

Grant us grace to sigh continually for heaven, our true country, and to regard our stay here on earth as a veritable exile. Grant that we may always consider ourselves dissatisfied in this strange land, so far away from the home of our aspirations, even though we enjoy great riches and live in the midst of abundance; and grant us a true disgust for the things of this world, and that we may find our only joy and pleasure in meditating on your law, obeying your precepts, practising your virtues, and hoping for the happiness you promised us. Save us, O Lord, from everything worldly, that our hearts may be always united to you, our only and sovereign good. Grant us grace to have your holy gospel in one hand, your holy cross in the other, and your vivifying spirit in our hearts.

I shall meditate on your gospel, in order to practise your maxims, and regulate my conduct according to its teachings. I shall carry your cross as a memento to rouse me to crucify myself, and to comfort me in my sufferings. I shall cherish your spirit and receive your adorable body, as a nourishment to strengthen me against my enemies, and as a power to stem the tide of my passions. Grant, O Lord, that I may patiently bear, like your Son Jesus, the hatred and

contempt of this world, that I may consider myself happy in being despised as you were, and that at the end of my life I may appear in your presence free from everything belonging to the prince of this world. Amen.

IV.—ON JESUS, MODEL OF MARRIED PERSONS.

In what way can married persons be imitators of Jesus? It is a truth, well established in the gospels and also in the Epistles of St. Paul, that Christ united Himself to His Church in the character of spouse, and He Himself calls her His spouse; and hence married people should truly represent in their marriage the union existing between Him and His Church. Husbands should love their wives, as Christ loves the Church and delivered Himself to death to sanctify her and make her without stain or wrinkle; and hence they should always have in view, like Him, the sanctification and salvation of each other, that they may be eternally united hereafter in heaven. Like Jesus and His Church, they should have but one heart and one soul and one conformity of feeling; they ought to help in each other's sanctification and in that of their family, in order that they may do honour by their lives to the union of Jesus to His Church, and His alliance to our frail nature.

How should married people bring up their children?

They should never forget that Jesus had taken upon Himself the character of father of all Christians, that He adopted them as His children, and constituted the Church their mother; and hence parents, like Him and the Church, should love their children with a holy, a divine, and a well-regulated love, but always subordinate to the love they owe to God. Like Jesus and the Church, they should employ all their care to preserve in their children the spiritual life they received at baptism; and if those children had lost their baptismal innocence, their parents should devote all their powers to help them to recover it. Like this heavenly and divine Spouse, they ought to teach their children to deny themselves, to carry their cross daily, to mortify their flesh, to despise all earthly goods, and everything great and esteemed in this world. Like Him and His Church, parents should labour to rear their children more for religion than for this world, more for heaven than for this earth, more to fill them with the science of salvation than with human and temporal things.

They should bequeath true faith and solid piety to them rather than worldly wealth, which often entails eternal ruin; and, finally,

parents should consider themselves mere caretakers of their children, and guardians of that divine affiliation which they received from Jesus through the ministration of the Church. What a terrible account God will one day demand about this holy and sacred deposit entrusted to parents, and the more rigorous it will be as the thing entrusted to them is valuable and recommended to their special and undivided care.

How can children become conformable to Jesus?

Children are not less bound to their parents than parents are to their children, because they must adopt Jesus as their model, and He subjected Himself to a state of infancy in order to become a model for man in all the stages of his life. Children should submit with humility to their parents, as Jesus did to Joseph and Mary; they should obey them with simplicity, should honour them as if invested with a divine paternity, and respect them as the associates of God, by providing for their support and maintenance. They ought to love their parents with filial affection, to assist them in their necessities, and to labour to acquire means to sustain the entire household.

They should be modest and humble like Jesus, separated from the society of the wicked, fond of prayer, and assiduous and punctual in all the exercises of religion, so as to preserve the grand and precious treasure of their innocence pure and unsullied. As children advance in years, they should grow in grace and wisdom before God and man, as Jesus did; and, as true imitators of Christ, they should prefer the interests, the commands, and the will of their heavenly Father to those of their earthly father; and if it be not conformable to the will of God, they ought to say on those occasions to their parents what Christ said to His: "Know ye not that I must be occupied about my Father's business;"[1] and children should never forget the language of Jesus, their model, who said, that "whosoever loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me."

EJACULATION TO JESUS, MODEL OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

O Jesus, model of married people, grant through your grace that they may represent your sanctity and that of your Church in their conduct, so that husbands will love their wives as you love the Church, and that wives will be obedient to their husbands as the

[1] Luke, ii. 49.

Church, your spouse, is to you; that husbands may labour in the sanctification of their wives as you have in the sanctification of your Church; that they may be faithful as the Church is to you, so that they may represent, through this sacrament which blesses and sanctifies their union, the union, peace, alliance, and intelligence existing between you and your Church.

Is it possible that Christians could embrace a state so holy without a vocation, without being called to it by Jesus? Is it possible that they merely consult their passions and evil inclinations, and that their intentions are purely animal and earthly? What a terrible misfortune for time and eternity must be the consequences of such marriages as these. O Lord Jesus, make all married persons well understand that in their state they need much greater help from God than even those living in solitude, that their dangers are greater and more numerous, and their obligations of far greater extent; and if you bless them with children, grant that they may always regard you as their model.

O Jesus, Father of futurity and model of all Christians, how those persons united in marriage should fear and tremble, seeing that they are charged with the care of children, for whose souls they must give a most strict account to you hereafter. How will they be able to discharge with sufficient holiness and accuracy the obligation imposed on them, if you do not grant them the graces and the wisdom to do so. Imprint upon the hearts of all married people, my Jesus, the same feelings which you and your Church have for your adopted children. Alas! my Jesus and Father of charity, you have given your blood, your spirit, and your life to gain the great blessing for us of becoming the children of God, and should not parents employ all their care and suffer everything, if necessary, to preserve in their children the august character they received at baptism. All the evil we do springs from the fact that we love them in a carnal manner only, and we do not perceive while we do so that we hate them instead of loving them when we love them in that fashion.

Grant us grace to love them for the love of you, and to love them only as you love them, so that we may be able to rear them for the kingdom of heaven, and to be eternally at God's throne. Grant us grace, dear Lord, to labour much more for their salvation than for their bodies, and for that food which does not perish rather than that which dieth out and is corrupted. O divine Jesus, infant model of the life all children ought to lead, grant that we, like you, may consecrate our infancy to God our Father. Ah, dear Lord, our

first feelings and desires ought to be directed to thee; but, alas, we have turned them to creatures, and hence amusements, self-love, dissipation, and objects pleasing to the senses, made such sensible impressions on us that we neglect to love you as we ought.

Pardon us, my God, the sins of our infancy, and all our future care shall be to employ ourselves in the affairs of our heavenly Father, and, like you, we shall always be obedient and submissive to our parents; we shall honour your divine paternity in theirs; and we shall respect and love them as you respected and loved St. Joseph and your immaculate Mother Mary. Grant us, dear Lord, the spirit and the virtues of your infancy—its simplicity and humility, its meekness and piety, and its sanctity and innocence. Grant that we may be small in malice, and that we may nourish ourselves with the milk of your divine word, so as to be strong in our holy faith.

Grant that we may live as strangers in the society and companionship of wicked and corrupted children, and that, like you, we may learn to speak respectfully and answer with courtesy every person who desires to advise and instruct us. Grant through your grace that our greatest concern may be to preserve our innocence and the divine affiliation which we received at our baptism, that we may grow in grace and wisdom before God and man, until we arrive at the age and sanctity of perfect men.

Grant, O God, that your wisdom may accompany us in all our ways and in all our conversations, that we may begin to carry the sweet and agreeable yoke of your law, and bear the weight of your cross so cheerfully as never to abandon them. Preserve us from those sins so common amongst children—from forgetting God's presence while addressing Him at holy prayer; from dissipation, falsehood, and too great a love of pleasure and amusement, from idleness, immodesty, wicked words, and all those defects to which children abandon themselves with so much facility, so that, O divine Infant, we may be able to manifest your infancy in ours, and become true imitators of you, who art our model and our God. Amen.

V.—ON JESUS CHRIST, MODEL OF MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

In what way should masters regard Jesus as the model of their conduct towards their servants?

It is certain that Jesus has all the power and authority of Lord and Master here on earth, and that if He so desired He could have a vast retinue of servants to obey His commands; but He deprived

Himself of all earthly honour because a state of lowliness was the most befitting His designs, which were to redeem mankind by a life of humiliation. He had His disciples under His command, and we can learn from His treatment of them how masters ought to act towards their servants. Like Jesus, they should command with gentleness and mercy, and enforce obedience through love rather than through fear, and hence masters should never have recourse to severity except on extraordinary occasions and after many relapses, and they should never dare to exact anything from them contrary to the laws of God.

Like Jesus, they should always receive the labours of their servants with thankfulness and condescension ; they should bear their defects in the spirit of charity, and never make their condition, which is sufficiently humiliating, still more severe and insupportable.

Like Jesus, masters should take great care of the spiritual and temporal health of their servants ; they should instruct them if they are ignorant, and correct them if they are vicious, and they ought to supply them with everything necessary for their spiritual wants ; and hence St. Paul writes to Timothy, saying : " If any man hath not care of His own, especially those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."[1] Therefore, masters should never forget that they are servants of God, who makes no distinction of persons.

It is a species of slavery to be obliged to be a servant, and hence masters should not make the servitude of another a cause to excite his pride and passion, but should rather make it a motive to be humble, forgiving, and forbearing. Masters should exonerate their servants from those labours which themselves could conveniently perform ; and in imitation of Jesus they should be humble, courteous, and kind to them, to serve and attend them in sickness and other visitations ; and if they could only remember how Jesus knelt down and washed His disciples' feet, they would have no difficulty in doing as He did. Finally, masters should take the place of parents in regard to their servants, and hence they should never so occupy them or overload them with labour, particularly on Sundays and holidays, as to give them no time for prayer and the other duties of their religion ; and this is why our Redeemer said : " Martha, thou art solicitous about many things—one thing is necessary ;"[2] that is, you must not so occupy yourself in worldly affairs as to neglect the affair of salvation ; and therefore masters should never require such labour

[1] 1 Ep. v. 8. [2] Luke, x. 41, 42.

and domestic duties from their servants as would prevent them from attending to the great affair of their salvation.

How can servants and those subject to others be able to imitate Christ?

The Son of God, who made all things, clothed Himself in our frail flesh, and in that state was obedient and subject to others, and while He was in this world He was the slave of all in it; and hence He said He came to do the will of His Father, and to serve and not to be served, and therefore He is the model which servants and dependents should propose to themselves for imitation.

Like Jesus, servants should regard the authority exercised over them as a portion of the divine authority, and, as our divine Redeemer says, they should "give to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar, and to God what belongs to God."[1] Servants and others who are subject should obey their superiors without any resistance, after the example of Jesus, because all power comes from God, and St. Paul says to the Romans: "He that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God."[2] The same apostle, St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, says: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart as to Christ, not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart."[3]

It follows from those truths that the authority which masters have is delegated to them from God, and hence servants should obey them as the representatives of God, and yet never to do anything for them contrary to His law; and hence they cannot lawfully aid or help them in the gratification of their criminal pursuits, nor to inflict any damage on the neighbour in his character or person; and, finally, they should never forget that St. Peter says: "It is right to obey God rather than man." Servants should serve and respect those above them not for human motives, or because the eyes of those they serve are upon them, but to do the will of God as servants of Jesus, whom they should always endeavour to imitate by their humility, their fidelity, and chastity.

They can imitate His humility by remembering that it is less dangerous to obey than to command; they can imitate His charity because it should be the principle of all their actions, and because they are bound to take care lest their disobedience or want of respect should be the cause of sin in their masters; they can imitate His fidelity by not depriving them of their property by stealth, or by

[1] Matt. xxii. 21. [2] Rom. xiii. 2. [3] Ephes. vi. 5, 6.

negligence, and by not allowing them to be wronged or cheated by others. What a happiness for masters to have servants such faithful imitators of the obedience of Jesus, and what a happiness also that those servants can feel that they are imitators of Christ in their obedience to their masters, and hence how ardently both should pray to Him for all the graces and virtues necessary for their vocation.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, MODEL OF MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

O my Saviour Jesus Christ, sovereign Master of all men, model of all authority, to whom all power in heaven and upon earth is given, teach us to be Christian masters, to be humble on account of our elevation, and entirely submissive to your orders and commandments; teach us to feel that the authority which we hold over our servants is delegated to us by you, and that you require us to use it according to your wishes, and in accordance with the rules of your holy wisdom.

Grant us grace, dear Lord, never to despise anyone subject to us, never to treat them with harshness, nor rule them as tyrant masters do. Grant, dear Lord, that we may never feel vain because we are masters, and because we have a great number of servants subject to us; but, on the contrary, that we may grieve on account of our dependence on others.

Who will not tremble when he reflects that the more he is exalted the more he is in danger of falling, and when he remembers the awful language written by St. Paul to Timothy, saying: "He who has not care for his domestics is worse than an infidel."[1] Have we ever seriously considered that the awful truth just quoted from the apostle, and which contains an indispensable obligation of paying a soul for each of the souls subjected to us, binds us to care them as a sacred deposit entrusted to us by the living God, and that we are bound to watch over their conduct, to instruct them in their duties to God, to themselves, and to their neighbours, to correct their defects, and to give them examples of piety and sanctity in every way we can.

If we knew well our danger and our obligations, we would soon see how much safer it is to obey than to command, and we would quickly comprehend the Holy Ghost when He says: "There is judgment against you, because you have been a snare to them over whom you should have watched."[2] Grant us grace, O divine Jesus, to discharge all our duties as masters with a Christian spirit, preserve us from

[1] 1 Tim. v. 8. [2] Osee, v. 1.

that proud domineering spirit which would make us regard our servants as beings very much beneath us.

Grant that we may treat them always as brothers in Jesus, regenerated by the same holy spirit, destined to the same heavenly inheritance, and higher, perhaps, and more holy before God than we are. Keep that last and terrible day before our minds, when they and we shall be on the same level, when death shall mingle their ashes and ours, when virtue alone shall be the distinguishing mark of the great and lowly, and when he who loved God best shall be great, and he who loved Him least shall be little; because on that day the only distinction the Lord will make will be what the good life of each will make manifest. How miserable will those masters then be who made their servants slaves to their passions, and subservient to their iniquities and injustices, who made them slaves to the devil instead of subjecting them to the empire of Jesus, and who, by their bad example and the little vigilance they exercised over their conduct, contributed, at least indirectly, to blast their hopes of heaven.

Preserve us, Lord Jesus, from such terrible evils as these, and that in all our actions we may never lose sight of your example. Grant that whilst we are commanding others, we ourselves may be subject to you and obedient to your precepts, and that we may not place our glory in being served and obeyed by men, but in serving you, the King of ages, immortal and invisible. As for us, dear Lord, who are servants, whom Providence was pleased to place in a state of subjection and dependence, and under an obligation to serve others, teach us by your grace, as you have taught us by your example, to be humble and content in our state of humiliation. Grant us grace to be faithful stewards over the persons and property of our masters. Grant us a silent, a willing, and a ready obedience, an unruffled patience, a tranquil humility, and a great spirit of penance in all our labours.

O my loving Jesus, we are not lowly in your sight on account of our servitude and the acts of humiliation we are bound to perform, but we are so on account of our sins, which makes us slaves of Satan and hinder us from becoming your true servants. We are comforted in our servitude, because we know that on the last day you will only consider how much virtue each of us possesses, and the more humble we have been, the more exalted you will make us. O Jesus, model of all servants, enlighten us with your divine light, teach us to respect your divine authority represented in the persons of our masters, as you respected it in kings and governors, and that we

may never imitate the pride and ostentation of those we serve, but their persons and authority only.

Make us as obedient to their commands as if you had commanded us; may we always have in view, as the principal object of our services, sentiments more elevated, more noble, and more worthy of the Christian name we bear than the desire or hope of temporal gain. Dear Jesus, never permit us to obey masters who may command us to do anything opposed to your holy maxims; grant that no inducement can tempt us to hold services which we cannot keep without violating the dictates of conscience and religion, because salvation must always be preferable to every temporal advantage no matter how considerable it may be; and grant us grace, good Lord, to know and to comprehend well, and to follow out perfectly, those important truths as best we can. Amen.

VI.—ON JESUS, THE MODEL OF THE POOR.

In what way can the poor imitate Jesus in their poverty? There are scarcely any other truths in the gospel better established than those which teach that Jesus preferred poverty to riches, because He wished to be born, to live, and to die in poverty. He was born in a stable, spent His life in hard labour, and died stripped of the only garment He possessed; and hence we see how much He loved poverty. He adopted that lowly state, so opposed to the spirit of the world, as the fittest to repair the ruin which the love of worldly goods had caused amongst men, to teach us how to despise them, and induce us to seek and fix our happiness in the possession of spiritual and eternal goods.

If a poor man possesses the least spark of the spirit of Jesus, can he refuse to be comforted in his poverty when he reads what Jesus said of His own abandonment: "The foxes have their dens and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of Man has not whereon to repose His head." Behold the wisdom and goodness of Christ, who is master of all the goods and riches of this world, and yet He becomes poor and humble to enrich us with His gifts and graces and the grand example of His holy poverty; and, therefore, the comforting consolation of the poor should be to feel that Jesus is their chief and their model. Like Him, they should bear their poverty with patience and resignation, they should esteem themselves happy to be so comformable to Him, and no matter how much they may be

in want of human comfort, they should never murmur against the Providence that so reduced them.

If they became poor through sloth, debauchery, or the lavish use they made of their worldly goods, they should receive all the sufferings accompanying their poverty with tranquillity and as one of the best penances they could perform; because the recollection of their sinful deeds should make them regard their privations as a just judgment due to their sins. The poor, like Jesus, their divine model, should strive to gain a living by labour and industry, and if, having done so, they still continue poor, they should not blush at their poverty, because the gospel tells us that Christ and His apostles were happy to receive the charities administered to them. It is a great gain to be born of poor parents, like our Redeemer, because it is most difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, and hence the poor should not desire to be rich or renowned in this world.

They should never forget how our Redeemer fled when the Jews wished to make Him King, and they should often call to mind the language of St. Paul which says: "They that will become rich fall into temptations and into the snares of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires which draw men into destruction and perdition."[1] The poor should never be jealous of those who are rich, but, on the contrary, should pity and compassionate them as so many slaves loaded with chains or stripped of all their worldly goods, and borne to the grave without a single coin of all they once possessed.

They should regard virtue, grace, their divine affiliation with the word of God, His love, His sacraments, the hope of the blessings to come, and even poverty itself, as their true wealth and only riches. They should labour to acquire the hidden treasure of the gospel only, which is no other than Jesus, in whom all the treasures of wisdom and science are contained, because he who possesses Jesus is rich in his poverty, and he who does not must be miserable in the midst of his riches.

Finally, the poor should be content if they have whereon to live and wherewith to clothe themselves; and even when those necessaries are not forthcoming, they ought to be resigned to the will of God, to abandon themselves entirely to his fatherly providence, and be disposed to die deprived of all human aid, if such be His divine arrangements; because to God alone we have to cling, and in Him alone we are to confide; and hence if we should be in want of all

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 9.

other things during life or in death, we ought to be in peace if we only could possess Jesus.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, MODEL OF THE POOR.

O my dear Jesus, who adopted a life of poverty in order to become the model of the poor, fill us with your holy spirit as we are reduced to a state of poverty like yours, and grant us a portion of the internal dispositions which you had in your poverty, for what use will it be to us to be externally like you if we cherish in our hearts sentiments contrary to yours.

Grant us a great love of poverty, and extinguish within us all longings after riches, and all desires which avarice could suggest to us; and as you have exalted the state of poverty by preferring it to the riches of this world, grant us grace to esteem it as you have, and that, so far from blushing at the humiliation inseparable to it, we may rejoice in being poor, and glory in following you and wearing your livery. What a grace and mercy you have given us, and from how many dangers you have delivered us in making us poor like yourself. We give you eternal thanks, O Lord Jesus, for placing us in the impossible position of satisfying our passions, our vanities, our ambition, and our sensualities.

O my amiable Saviour, you are now the only treasure we seek, the only good we desire, and the everlasting recompense we hope for; because you know all we suffer in our state of poverty, and as you alone know that we are deprived of all human aid, we beseech you to help us by your grace not to be cast down or discouraged by our deprivations.

Make us know the value of your eternal kingdom, and make us see the countless riches you have prepared and promised to all true imitators of your poverty. All the goods of this world have no attractions for us, because we look upon them as so much filth and corruption compared with the hope of one day possessing you, and because you promised to be the protector and the father of the poor, to hear their sighs, and to give them your eternal kingdom.

O holy poverty, how little you are loved by men, although Jesus has enriched this world through you with His gifts, His graces, and His blessings. It was you, O holy poverty, that won happiness for Lazarus, whose death was so precious in the sight of God. The Redeemer of mankind was born, and lived and died in your humiliating embrace. O divine Saviour, grant that we, the poor, may know

the value of holy poverty ; grant that we may love and endure it with joy and patience, so that, after having followed your life of poverty, we may be able to participate in your life of glory. Amen.

VII.—ON JESUS, MODEL OF PERSONS UNJUSTLY PERSECUTED AND AFFLICTED.

In what way can persons afflicted and persecuted imitate Jesus ?

Jesus was hated, despised, and persecuted by the world, because His life and doctrines were entirely opposed to it. We know that His life was a journey through countless sufferings and humiliations, that He was an object of ridicule to men, that He was censured and condemned for His harmless words and actions not only in life, but after His death, and we know that He will be so in His followers to the end of time, and hence all who wish to live according to the rules of His gospel must expect no better treatment.

If we desire to do well, we must not refuse the cross and humiliation, but we must learn from Jesus how to receive and bear them. Like Jesus, we ought to suffer and be attached to the cross, in order to do homage to the grandeur of the Deity, to satisfy His justice which we have so often offended, to testify our love and gratitude to Him, and to become examples of obedience and patience in His presence.

Like Jesus, the persecuted and the afflicted should not murmur against God nor against those who afflict them, but to suffer like him in silence and in peace, and to adore the arrangements of God who afflicts us for our good, and against whose will nothing can happen to us.

We must remember that we did not become Christians and members of Christ's mystic body in order to lead a life of effeminacy and free from sufferings and crosses, because says St. Paul to Timothy : "We are called to them," and all, says he, "that wish to live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution ;"[1] and hence when others maltreat and cast insults up us, we ought not to retort with threats or injuries, but to place our case in the hands of Him who will judge according to justice. Whilst suffering persecution, we should be like Christ, as "a sheep led to the slaughter, or as the meek lamb in the hands of the shearer."[2]

We should not attribute our sufferings to our persecutors nor to those who give us pain, but to the power and justice of God ; and

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 12. [2] Acts, viii. 32.

hence we should say what Jesus said to Pilate: "Thou wouldst not have any power against me, if it were not given thee from above."[1] Every time we suffer we ought to adore and praise our omnipotent Father, and as the vine branch is united to the tree, so should we endure all the afflictions which may happen to us in Jesus, and with Him and united to Him; and we should never forget that, "if we have been planted together in the likeness of Christ's death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection."[2]

Like Jesus, we should regard the cross as that portion of God's power and wisdom which triumphed over the world and all His enemies, and through which we will be victorious over the devil and our passions; and, like Him, we ought to consider ourselves happy in being afflicted and despised, when we know that the honour, the power, and the glory of God and His Spirit repose upon him who silently and patiently suffers. By sufferings we honour and glorify God, and by afflictions we bring down His holy Spirit upon us; and how honoured we should feel when we are thus made participators in the sufferings of our Redeemer, to drink of His chalice and to do so with the holy and resigned dispositions with which He drank of His chalice.

Let us never lose sight of Jesus, the grand model of all our suffering; let us never seek comfort under the trials we endure except in Him, and let all our concern be to unite all our sufferings to Him. If we wish to be His disciples and not to suffer, we wish to be above our Lord and Master, which is contrary to His teaching when He says: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord."[3] As Jesus entered into His glory through sufferings, so, too, we must enter into the same glory through many tribulations; and as His Father prepared His kingdom for Jesus, so He has prepared the same kingdom for us; and hence if we wish to be in heaven with Jesus, we must follow Him in His sufferings.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, MODEL OF THE UNJUSTLY PERSECUTED AND AFFLICTED.

O my adorable Jesus, behold me prostrate at your feet, and confessing that my life ought to be one of suffering and crosses, as yours has been. Faith teaches me that I ought to suffer like a condemned sinner, to satisfy the justice of God and to obtain your grace and mercy. It is most just that I shall suffer after having

[1] John, xix. 11. [2] Rom. vi. 5. [3] Matt. x. 24.

spent the greater part of my life in worldly pleasures; it is right that I should suffer in health after having abused it by offending you; and it is right that I should lose the esteem of men after having so long sought my own glory.

Do I not merit all I can suffer; and if all creatures should turn against me, why should I complain, since I deserve not only endless humiliations, but eternal punishment as well? O my divine Jesus, if you have been treated badly, you who art the green wood—that is, innocence and sanctity—what do not I deserve who am the dry and barren wood, and only fit to be cast into the fire to be burned?

I ought to suffer as one of your children destined to partake of your heavenly inheritance, because you chastise those whom you love, and as St. Paul says: "That we will be children of God and your co-heirs, provided we suffer like you and with your dispositions." As I am one of your members, united to you and living your life, I must participate in your sufferings, and hence I cannot expect to live your life and follow your doctrine, and not to be subject to the contempt, the hatred, and the insults of this world.

But, Lord Jesus, as all this cannot induce me to suffer with patience, I ought at least to give you thanks for my sufferings, in order to testify my love for you, who gave so many shining proofs of your love by all the trials and humiliations you endured for me. If I wish to walk in your footsteps, I must do so by following the example of suffering you have given me.

When I reflect upon what a Christian really ought to be, I feel convinced that my life should be one of suffering and affliction, because it was by the cross that Jesus reconciled the world and opened the kingdom of heaven to us, and by His cross and humiliations I am a regenerated and a Christian man. All the earthly goods and heavenly graces I enjoy, all the blessings I possess in the Catholic Church, and all I hope to possess in the world to come, are derived from the merits and sufferings of Jesus; and why, therefore, do I refuse the small suffering God is pleased to send me?

I ought to receive those trials and crosses with great faith and reverence, but, beloved Lord, what can I do without you, since all the sufferings and afflictions I have to endure must become an occasion of sin if you do not give me your spirit, and unite yourself to me, and thus enable me to bear them with patience and resignation. Therefore, dear Jesus, grant me grace to suffer always, and never to complain, and enable me to regard all these creatures which become an occasion of suffering to me as so many instruments which you

make use of to humble and make me perfect. And, dear Lord, as I am a victim to be immolated to your glory, all my life should be an uninterrupted sacrifice, and all my sufferings ought to be a preparation to make me a victim worthy to be offered to you; and, therefore, my Jesus, mortify my heart, afflict my body, and humble my soul, in order to make me an agreeable sacrifice to you.

Finally, beloved Redeemer, if I am to be one of those living stones to be used in the eternal edifice you are raising to the glory of your Father, give me as many strokes of the hammer as you wish, and employ as many persons as you consider necessary to shape me, and make me perfectly fitted for the place you have for me in your temple. I shall not rebel against those people, but, on the contrary, I shall consider them the workmen you have employed to build up your temple, because I know they have no power but what you gave them, and that they can do me no harm but what you know will be for my spiritual good; and the request I ask is, that you, my merciful Saviour, will pardon them as I have. I shall never cease to love them, though they may hate and detest me, and I shall always regard them with compassion and mercy, because when they afflict me, they do much more harm to themselves than to me, and whilst they are offending you, my Saviour, they are doing me a great good, by humbling and persecuting me.

I will no longer regard with dislike the trials and crosses which your providence will be pleased to send me. I will receive them with humility, and accept them for my own glory; and I shall always esteem myself happy to be worthy to suffer for the glory of your name, and I shall always regard with joy all those pains and afflictions which are to gain for me eternal glory hereafter. Amen.

VIII.—ON JESUS, THE MODEL OF PENITENTS.

How should penitents be conformable to Jesus? He was loaded with our iniquities, and, as St. Peter says, has borne them on His body upon the cross. He became a victim of propitiation for the sins of the world, and, according to St. Paul, He was bruised for the sins of His people. He had a complete knowledge of the enormity of those sins, and His heart was afflicted and His soul plunged into a terrible agony on account of them; He hated their sins with an infinite loathing, and a repugnance proportioned to His love for His Father; He fasted, prayed, and delivered His body to all sorts of outrage, to destroy sin and reconcile us to our offended Father.

Sinners, therefore, should have Jesus, the grand model of penitents, always before their eyes, and they should always imagine that they see Him loaded with their crimes, and thus teaching them how they ought to do penance; because if we expect to be truly penitent, we should strive to conceive something of the injustice and enormity of sin; we should strive to feel how antagonistic it is to God's infinite sanctity and the eternal punishments it deserves, and we should hate it as Jesus did, and love God as He loves Him.

The sinner who wishes to obtain pardon and grace ought to carry upon him the evidences of his repentance, and hence his heart, his soul, and his body, his interior and his exterior, should bear the hallowed impress of a truly penitential regret. He should be illumined by the spirit of Jesus in order to comprehend the majesty, the sanctity, the justice, and the goodness of the God he had offended. He should understand the extent of his ingratitude to that great and good God, the contempt with which he treated His law, His threats, and His promises; the shameful injustice he committed by preferring a finite to an infinite good, the creature to the Creator, a momentary pleasure to eternal happiness, and the service of Satan to that of the living God, his real and legitimate master.

He should likewise strive to know how he trampled the blood of his Redeemer under foot by his crimes; what an injury he did the Holy Ghost, the spirit of grace; how he violated the alliance contracted at his baptism between him and his God, and how he rendered himself unworthy of all graces and blessings.

When a penitent knows well and has properly considered all these things, it will not be difficult for him to feel true penitential sorrow for his sins. This grief ought to be an emanation from, and a participation in the sorrow which Jesus has for the sins of mankind, and it should be as intense, if possible, as he is separated from God, and hence the heart of the penitent should be so dead to sin and to the world, that God's love may easily displace the love of creatures, because the true penitent is formed by his love for God and His hatred of sin, and because God demands the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart, and a soul crushed with grief and sorrow gives Him honour and glory.

But what ought to be the depth and extent of that soul's sorrow which has lost the grace and friendship of its God? It is impossible to say or even to comprehend, because it ought to be proportioned to that of Jesus, and ought to be commensurate with the loss of so great a good as innocence, and so inestimable a blessing as God's friend-

ship. This sorrow should be evident from the change in the penitent's life; his words should be full of meekness and humility, his looks should be modest, his manner orderly, his actions holy, and his habits simple and becoming. A true penitent should retire into solitude, and there pour out his heart before God; he should shed bitter tears over the ruin of his conscience; he should send forth those deep sighs and ineffable groanings which the Holy Ghost alone can create in the hearts of the truly contrite; and, if he prudently can, he should clothe himself in sackcloth and ashes, and pray and cry in that sorrowful and penitential apparel to God to pardon and have mercy on him. The true penitent should humble and chastise his body by painful and mortifying works, because as the effeminate life of a Christian is condemned, it should be much more so in sinners, who are bound to humble and to mortify their flesh.

The model of the true penitent should be Jesus, praying, and fasting, and sleeping on the ground, and separated from all worldly commerce; and from this grand model he should learn to deny himself the pleasures of the senses, and he should never forget how he has made himself unworthy of everything, that through the pure mercy of God he is not in hell, and that he ought to live only to suffer and punish himself for all the crimes he has committed. He is not allowed, it is true, to destroy his life, because God does not permit or demand this; but he is bound to carry as many of Christ's mortifications as his body can bear, and hence he should regard everything calculated to humble his flesh as a great and blessed benefit. All his exterior should be penitential and edifying to all he had scandalized, because it would be burlesquing the penitential life to live in the same easy and unmortified manner he lived before his conversion.

What kind of an idea could people have of the malice of mortal sin if only small penances were necessary to pardon it? and hence the long-established and unchanged laws of our general and particular councils require penances proportioned to the number and enormity of the penitent's crimes.

The holy fathers say that the repentance should not be less than the crimes committed; for instance, long habits are cured by long and efficacious remedies, pride is exterminated by humiliations, avarice by alms, the love of worldly pleasures by austerity, excesses in eating and drinking by abstinence, idleness by occupation, the love of society by retirement and solitude, blasphemies and all other sins of the tongue by prayer and adoration; hatreds, animosities, and vengeance

by suffering contempt, bad treatment, and injuries, and by humbling oneself before his neighbours; and anger is stifled by meekness, and so on of all the other sins. It was in this way Jesus practised the virtues opposed to our crimes, and we, in order to be true penitents, must adopt the same practice and imitate His example.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE MODEL OF PENITENTS.

O my dear and adorable Redeemer, you are the model of all true penitents, and by an effort of your infinite love for us you loaded yourself with our iniquities; you wept and mourned over our sins, and you even suffered the pain of them in your innocent body. Ah, my Jesus, when I contemplate your life of penance, and when I reflect upon all you suffered in mind and body for the expiation of my crimes, I feel ashamed to lead any longer my present infamous life. Give me, dear Jesus, the sentiments of a true penitent, make me feel the enormity of sin, make me hate it as you do, and give me a little of that infinite antipathy which your heavenly Father has against it.

Create within me a new heart and spirit, and lift me up from the nothingness into which sin has plunged me; make me a new creature by destroying in me the three sources of sin—the pride of life, the love of worldly goods, and of earthly pleasures, in order that I may love only you. This is the kind of love that makes the true penitent, that destroys sin, and converts the soul by turning her from creatures to her sovereign good. I know, my dear Jesus, what an injustice I committed by loving anything but you, and when I call to mind all my acts of injustice and ingratitude to you, I am only filled with shame and confusion, when I ought to be overwhelmed with sorrow and regret. O my most amiable and forbearing Jesus, I shall never cease to grieve and mourn over the past, and I shall spend the remaining years of my life in tears and sorrow at the recollection of your love and my own ingratitude. My joy henceforth shall be to weep at the foot of your cross to which my sins have nailed you; and my face shall be bowed down and even pressed upon this earth to signify my grief and express my hope of pardon. O Lord, comfort me in my wretchedness, for the fear of thy judgments fills me with dread and alarm, my sins are always before me, and a hidden voice tells me, "Where is thy God," what hast thou done, why hast thou offended me?

Ah, my dear and adorable Redeemer, now I know what a wicked

and ungrateful thing it was to abandon thee, who art the only good of my soul; but to whom shall I go if not to you? I come to you now in the hope of finding a merciful Father who will pardon and forgive me. I know that I do not deserve to be called your child, but I shall be most happy to accept the lowest place in your mansion, because I am the most ungrateful and unworthy of all your pardoned children.

I have chosen the last place, dear Lord, because it is that which suits me best. Why should I dare to exalt myself, I who am degraded lower than the brute beast? If men make me the butt of opprobrium and the object of insults and contempt, I shall be as a deaf man who hears not, and as a dumb man who cannot reply. I shall lie humbled beneath the omnipotent hand of God; and trembling with fear before His throne, I shall await there in peace till He raises me up and says to me, thy sins are forgiven thee. O my divine Jesus, I dare not look up to heaven nor approach thy holy altar, when I consider the sanctity of the great God I have offended, and when I contemplate the deformity and the darkness of my soul. I should by right be prostrate at the door of the Church, and embracing the feet of the faithful and beseeching them to pray to God for me.

How glad I should be to appear clothed in sackcloth and ashes at your holy temple if you deemed it prudent, and in that sorrowful and penitential apparel to ask the faithful to trample me under foot, because, my dear Jesus, I deserve all that and much more, since I had the incomprehensible insolence and ingratitude to trample you under my feet. I tremble whenever I look up at the adorable mysteries I have so often profaned, and hence I can no longer demand the bread of thy children nor even a single crumb fallen from thy table; and although I feel I must die if I do not eat of this bread of life, still I know how unworthy I am to receive it or any other good from thy adorable hands. On one side, the sight of my sins keeps me back, and, on the other, the love of my God invites me to come and eat and be strong. I wish to do so, and yet I do not wish to approach when I consider the love of my God, and I dread to approach when I reflect on my sins.

O criminal and sinful life which has made me unworthy to approach my only good. O my God, how just it is to gain this bread by mortification and penitential tears. This bread of life should be the price and the recompense of true repentance, the consolation of many tears, and the comfort resulting from true contrition and sorrowful regret. O my adorable Jesus, I will still continue to make known to you my feelings of sorrow, because you gave me grace to do so.

I know that sin is an evil so great as to make me not only unworthy of every spiritual blessing, but of all temporal happiness as well. Therefore, dear Lord, treat me as you wish, afflict and humble my proud spirit, my corrupt heart, and my sinful body, because as all three are culpable, it is just that all should be punished. Deprive my soul of consolation and load my body with maladies and infirmities, for I deserve far more than all this. I shall consider myself very happy to receive these visitations in the spirit of true penance, since you, my Jesus, know better than I do the proper remedies to heal the wounds inflicted upon my soul by mortal sin. Sometimes I cannot understand how to punish myself for my sins, because I fear my hand is too sparing to strike, but I cannot be deceived when I receive with love all the penances and sufferings your providence is pleased to send me.

Why, dear Lord, should I permit you to act single-handed and do nothing at all myself? O my God, grant me grace to always entertain such thoughts as these. I shall chastise my body to bring it under subjection, and I will crucify my flesh, and abstinence and fasts, prayer and labour, solitude, privation of worldly pleasures, and mortifications shall be my future inheritance.

I have abused all my senses by making them subservient to iniquity and injustice, and now I should make them subservient to my repentance. If people be too indulgent to me I shall be truly unhappy; but you, my God, will save me from this danger, when you conduct me to that holy tribunal where I shall find a just judge, an enlightened physician, and a charitable father—a judge who will condemn me to tears and sufferings proportioned to my crimes, a physician who understands my maladies and will prescribe befitting remedies, and a father and pastor who will receive me with patience and kindness. Supply, dear Lord, my want of repentance; be you my father, my physician, the bishop and the pastor of my soul, that I may live a penitent life, and, dying in your arms, I will send forth the cry of a contrite heart and the tears of a soul truly afflicted for having offended you. Amen.

IX.—ON JESUS, THE MODEL OF VIRGINS.

How should virgins imitate Jesus? When He resolved to redeem the world, He selected the state of virginity as the most preferable, because it was the most holy, the most perfect, and the most proper for the discharge of His divine functions, and because it was the

most conformable to the great designs He had in view to separate men from the love of earthly things and from the pleasures of the senses, the fruitful sources of all the evils reigning in this world. Virginity contributes most powerfully to destroy those two fountains of crime, and hence virgins must learn from Jesus how to love virtue, how to live, and how to fulfil the obligations of their holy vocation. Jesus desired that His body should be formed from the blood of a virgin, to make us understand how much He loved virginity. He consecrated, in the chaste womb of His Virgin Mother, His soul and body to His Father, as a host holy and without stain, to honour the purity and sanctity of His own being, and to redeem mankind by the sacrifice of a virginal victim.

Could He manifest more clearly how much He loved and honoured virginity than by becoming the Son of a virgin mother, and uniting His divinity to a virgin soul and body? And what proves still further His deep love for this virtue is that His enemies, who were so vigilant over His conduct, and who accused Him of almost every crime, never dared impute to Him anything contrary to this holy virtue. The sanctity and austerity of His life, the propriety and modesty of His manner and looks, the prudence of His acts and conversations, His separation and estrangement from the world, and even the surprise of His disciples at seeing Him in converse with a woman, even though it was touching her salvation, all prove His great love for this virtue, and put above all suspicion what even the malignity of His enemies never dared to invent against Him.

Virgins should never lose sight of this grand model and divine spouse, and, like Him, they should regard themselves as consecrated to God alone, and to honour the purity and sanctity of His divine Son; and they should never forget that, as their state is more perfect than that of ordinary Christians, so, likewise, should their lives be.

They ought to live as modestly as if they could see only beneath and above them; their ears should hear the word of God only, their tongue should always speak His praises, their intellect should know and contemplate His grandeur, their hearts should never cease to love Him, nor their bodies to be offered up to Him as so many victims of penance and mortification. All within them should breathe sanctity; they should have no other concern than to please the Lord, and Jesus alone should live in them to consolidate and preserve the holy alliance they contracted with God.

As their state obliges them to sanctity of soul and body, they

should remember that they can never preserve that sanctity except by humility, diffidence, and a low opinion of themselves ; and hence a presumptuous and proud virgin is very near her fall, if she have not fallen already in the sight of God. The flower of virginity retains its beauty, and acquires fresh vigour and new splendour in solitude as in a fertile field ; it cannot endure the full blaze of earthly sunshine, because the air and glory of this world are not congenial to her, and, consequently, she never can appear in their midst without great danger and many precautions.

The vessel in which virginity is carried is as brittle as glass, and the smallest accident may break it ; and hence virgins are bound to constant vigilance and attention touching every object around them. Prayer and the sacraments should be the food of the virgin ; she must humble her body by labour, always following the Lamb, and hence always in His divine presence ; she must be most temperate in eating and drinking, poor and modest in her dress and furniture, mortified in her appearance, and no indecent gait or haste in her movements. She must be reserved in her language, recollected in her inmost heart, orderly in her actions, and penitential in every respect, as becometh one glorifying and carrying God in her body. Virgins must remember that they no longer belong to themselves, but to Jesus, to whom they were consecrated at baptism in common with all Christians, by confirmation, and the holy Eucharist, and in an especial manner by their state of life—a consecration which obliges them to manifest, in the most perfect manner they can, the life and sanctity of their spouse and master, Jesus Christ.

They should never forget that He who exalted them to that sublime state, and to whom they are so closely united, is a jealous spouse, to whom the least infidelity is painful. Curiosity to see or to be seen, an over free form of expression, a torrent of talk about the world, an incautious or superfluous conversation, careless or unnecessary visits, and time lost in idle and useless entertainments, are frequently the beginning of a confirmed infidelity. Virgins should likewise remember that as God was pleased to dwell in them as in a temple specially dedicated to Himself, they ought to use extreme care to remove from this temple every thought, desire, and act which could in the least profane or even sully it.

The soul should dwell in this temple in the most profound silence and respect, that it may be always ready to hear the voice of God when He comes to speak to it, because dissipation, impatience, and every strong ebullition and emotion disturb the tranquillity of this

temple; and hence virgins should be specially careful to observe a profound silence and a marked respect for that holy place.

A virgin should do all she can to enter into the designs of Jesus in her regard, and hence she should never cease to do good works and to fill herself with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and with all the fruits of justice, lest her holy oil should be exhausted and her lamp extinguished just when she ought to be ready to meet her heavenly spouse. The virgin, therefore, should use great precaution to preserve the light of faith and the ardour of charity, lest she should find herself in the darkness of that night of which our Lord speaks, when she can do nothing for eternity.

How firm and courageous a virgin must be to conquer the temptations to which she is exposed from her visible and invisible enemies. Virgins must be martyrs of virginity to endure all the sufferings with which they shall be constantly assailed, and hence their arms of defence should be humble prayer and boundless confidence in Jesus, a constant flight and retirement from this world, and an absolute estrangement from the temptations and occasions of sin; and their refuge and defence against their enemies should be their own home, the house of God, and the society of virgins like themselves. As virgins are the most noble and illustrious portion of the flock of Jesus, the angelic and sweet-smelling flowers of the church militant, and as Jesus is their chief, their model, and their spouse, they must remember that a fall from a state so sublime must be attended with very sad and terrible consequences, and hence very difficult to be repaired.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, MODEL OF VIRGINS.

O Jesus, spouse and model of virgins, our chief and protector, our life and our strength, you have exalted us to the privileged and sublime distinction of your spouse, and as you consecrated our souls and bodies unconditionally to the glory of your Father, grant, through your omnipotent grace, that we may fulfil all the duties of our holy state, so that we may be able to correspond with the designs of your grace and mercy, which inspired and moved us to embrace and live in the holy state of virginity. What a happiness for us who are entirely disengaged from the inconvenient and always dangerous obligation to please a frail mortal man, and that we have in our present state no other care than to please thee, dear Lord, the only object of our love.

We have nothing to fear from the excess of our affection for you, because the more we love you the more virginal we become, and the more we are united to you the more spiritual we feel, and the more free we are from the pleasures of the senses and the vanities of the world. As you, dear Jesus, are our only good, our only hope, and our all, and as we are yours, and as our only joy is to belong to you, never permit the hallowed bond of allegiance uniting us in one to be broken, and keep us so inseparably united to you that no sin or temptation shall ever be able to sever us from you in life or death. We know and feel, dear Jesus, that we carry a most precious treasure in a most fragile vessel, a treasure which you confided to our keeping; but you, dear Lord, will guard it for us, and you will carry it in your hands, that the light of your grace may shine out in our weakness.

We know that we are exposed to countless enemies, each of whom endeavours to make us violate the fidelity we vowed to you, and hence we have need of the greatest precaution. We feel a terrible fear and sadness creeping over us when we reflect on all the dangers besetting our pathway, and that we must soon fall if not sustained by your special protection. Therefore, dear Jesus, protect and guard us, and bear us up in your hands, and hide us in your holy tabernacle and in the secrecy of your countenance; and grant that your sacred wounds and altars may become our refuge, where, like chaste and timid doves, we can fly and hide ourselves from the danger of becoming the victims of sin and Satan.

O blessed solitude of retirement and separation from all in this world, how necessary you are for us, in order to lead successfully that life of sanctity to which our vocation obliges us. O wicked world, how much should virgins fear and fly from you, since all your conversations and every object you present to them is charged with poison to infect and destroy their souls and bodies. Grant, dear Lord, that so far from desiring to see or to be seen, we may hide from and live unknown to the world in our holy solitude, to be entirely occupied with you in holy prayer, in silence, and in labour.

The entire study and occupation of our lives should be to imitate the angels, and hence we should begin to do here on earth what they are doing in heaven. Experience has too well taught us that society, with its dissipations and foolish conversations, is most dangerous for us, for sometimes a single word or glance is enough to disconcert and torment us. Even in retirement we are not entirely sheltered from temptations, because even there the infernal dragon vomits forth a flood of alarm to intimidate and overwhelm us;

and the flesh, although mortified, sometimes revolts against the spirit, and we feel, in spite of ourselves, the evil which we hate, and hence, dear Lord, we require much of your grace to conquer this domestic enemy.

Defend us, beloved Saviour, against those temptations so formidable and severe; grant us a faith so lively and so strong that, like a buckler, it will serve to repel and extinguish all the inflamed arrows of the evil one. Grant us a strong hope to animate us for the combat, that truth may be the cincture of our loins, that confidence in your love may sustain us, and that the word of God may be the sword to defend ourselves against those venemous spirits that crowd the heavens, and that the world with all its glories and attractions may always be to us most vile and contemptible. We have chosen you, our crucified Saviour, for our portion; you are more dear to us than all that this world could present to us, increase the knowledge of your riches and glory more and more in us, that we may advance every day in loving you more and more.

Whatever sufferings, insults, trials, and wrongs you are pleased to send upon us, we promise to follow you faithfully, and we will cheerfully go wheresoever you wish to conduct us. We know you will repay our tribulations with a flood of comfort whenever you allow us to possess you, when you unite yourself to us in the adorable Eucharist, when you raise us up to the true contemplation of your sublime truths, your mysteries, and your glories; when you thus honour and exalt us, we feel prepared to suffer with joy all the tribulations you are pleased to ask us to endure. Life should always appear insupportable and too long, on account of those yearnings which your love produces in us to possess you, and to be perfected in that eternal union which you promised us.

Do not permit us, dear Redeemer, to be on the number of those foolish virgins who placed all their virginity in the purity of their bodies, and neglected to ornament their hearts with thy other virtues, and who so prided themselves on the sufficiency of this kind of virginity, that you were forced to reject them for ever from your kingdom, and cast them off as if you had never known them. Alas! how can we preserve virginity of body if we abandon ourselves to the seductive irregularities of this world, and if we do not labour to store our hearts with the holy oil of your grace and the sacred fire of your love. Dear Lord, you know that your love and grace have created within us ardent desires, holy longings, impatience, and eagerness to be united to you in heaven.

When will you come and show us the beauty of your countenance? When shall we be united to those virgins who are in company with you in your heavenly kingdom? All our desires are for you, and nothing in heaven or on earth can ever be the object of our affections but you; we shall always sigh and be unhappy till we hear you saying: Come forth, my well-beloved; come forth from your exile, and receive the crown of glory which I have prepared for you in the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

IX.—ON JESUS, THE MODEL OF RELIGIOUS AND SOLITARIES.

How can religious and solitaries be imitators of Jesus?

Jesus, the Word of God, was in the solitude of His Father's bosom from eternity. He became man in time, and hid Himself in the solitude of His mother's womb, where He offered Himself up to His Father, adored Him, and annihilated Himself in His presence; and if He appeared in the temple at the age of twelve, and astounded the learned doctors of the law with His uncreated wisdom, it was only for a short time. He returned to Nazareth, lived retired in submission and obedience to Joseph and Mary; He laboured for a living with His own hands, did penance there for our sins and example, and if He showed Himself again in the world, it was to discharge the divine functions of His ministry.

He frequently retired into the desert, and prayed whole nights to His Father; the sepulchre which afterwards contained His dead body became His cell, and, although hidden from our eyes, we adore this divine solitary at the right hand of His Father in heaven and on our altars here on earth. This is the grand model religious ought to imitate, and, like Him, they should allow the holy spirit to lead them into the desert to do penance, to employ themselves with God alone in the great affair of salvation, and to grieve over their own sins and the sins of the world.

Like Jesus, they should love a hidden life, a life unknown to the world, and to remember that as it forgets the dead, so shall it forget them. Their life should be hidden in God with Jesus Christ, in order to contemplate invisible things and the grandeur of the divine attributes, and of the mysteries of their God. Religious should live in their cells as Jesus did in the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary, offering themselves to God in sacrifice, adoring Him continually, humbling themselves, and hiding their endowments and perfections. They should demean themselves in their monasteries and homes of

retreat as Jesus did in Joseph's house; they should labour and learn to live in obedience, in poverty and chastity, above the shadow of suspicion; and thus they will be honouring the poor, humble, and suffering life of Jesus, and in this way they will be making a continual sacrifice of their hearts and will to holy obedience, and at the same time immolating their bodies to chastity and their worldly goods to holy poverty. They should be as happy in their retirement as in a place of the most agreeable repose, and they should regard it as a fortress where they can successfully fight and easily triumph over their enemies.

A religious should never voluntarily appear in the world, he should bury himself in his solitude like a tree deeply rooted in the earth, so that he cannot be torn away from it without the greatest difficulty. When he comes out of his retirement, he is like a fish out of water; he cannot long retain his spiritual existence, for a very slight intercourse with the world will be long enough to learn its false maxims and to follow its fatal seductions, and sad experience has taught many how truly the world can effect the ruin of the religious. Solitaries should be like Jesus, the flowers of the field and the lilies of the valley which the hand of the Lord hath planted; they should be cultivated and watered with His heavenly dews, but if transplanted elsewhere they will become agents to the pride and vanity of man.

Religious should keep close in their retirement as if in an ark, near Jesus their true Noah; they should dwell in their homes with feelings of joy, gratitude, and thankfulness, when they remember how the crimes of this world, like so many frightful abysses and cataracts, engulf so many thousands of unfortunate souls. Solitaries should sometimes be with Jesus on Thabor, contemplating His glories, tasting how sweet and agreeable He is, and filling themselves with the hope of the happy days to come; and at other times they should be entombed with Him, never permitting the corruption of human nature to domineer over them, and remaining patiently there till they arise on the last day filled with glory and heavenly light. If religious have to appear sometimes in the world, they should be there like so many brilliant lights, and, like Jesus Christ after His resurrection, speaking only of the kingdom of God; and when they are forced to leave their retirement on the business of salvation, they should appear so overflowing with the spirit of God as to make men regard them with reverence and awe.

A religious should be in his cell as in the tabernacle of the God of Israel, happy to be so near Jesus, the ark of the covenant, singing the

praises of God, prostrate like Magdalen at the feet of her Saviour, listening to His divine word, nourishing himself with the adorable body of his Redeemer, sighing and weeping in the darkest corner of his cell, and, like a true penitent, penetrated at the sight of that eternity into which he is so soon to enter. He should be pierced with a profound grief for his sins, and should expiate them by rigid penances; he ought to tremble at the terrible judgments of God, and should be continually anticipating them; his only occupation should be to please the Lord, and prepare himself for death by constantly dying to himself and to everything in this world.

Finally, the solitary should be in his cell as if nailed to a cross, on which he had crucified himself to the world, where he is dead to this life, where he lives in God and for God alone, where all his thoughts, words, and actions should be in heaven, and where he must wait in peace and happiness the coming of his Saviour to liberate him from his exile.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE MODEL OF RELIGIOUS AND SOLITARIES.

O my divine Jesus, model of the religious and the solitary, what a great grace, mercy, and happiness it is to live apart from the world, and to have received from you this great and inestimable grace. I was conducted by your spirit into this desert, to live the life of a solitary, and to follow there the example you left me of perfect obedience, real poverty, and finished sanctity.

Grant me grace to love poverty as you loved it, and that I may find more comfort and satisfaction in it than the miser does in looking at and counting his gold. Grant that I may make, like you, a continual sacrifice of my spirit and my will by an obedience strictly humble and entire, and that, like you, I may live in such perfect estrangement from everything which could in the least sully the purity of my soul or body; because when I entered into this holy state, I made a sacrifice of both to thee, dear Jesus, and I shall renew it every day of my life.

Penetrated with the grandeur of your Father's omnipotence, His sanctity, His justice, and His mercy, and seeing the extreme need I have of His aid, I shall continue for ever in His presence as a victim stripped of every possible thing, and always ready to be immolated to His glory; and I shall always keep my hands lifted up to thee on the mountain, telling thee that there is nothing in heaven or on earth that I desire or love but you alone. No matter

how lonely and painful this solitude may feel to me, I shall always consider it far more agreeable than the land of Egypt, where I was so long in bondage; and although I shall have no other food in this desert than bread and water, I will not complain, lest I should perish. My comfort and consolation shall be that celestial and hidden manna which you left me in the Sacred Scriptures and in the Adorable Sacrament of the altar, and which comes down so plentifully to me in my solitude.

The living waters of grace, which flow incessantly and so copiously from your sacred wounds, shall be my strength and firm hope of entering soon, under your unerring guidance, the country of my aspirations and my love—the true land of promise. Grant that I may always advance, through your great mercy, in faith and perfection, and that I may ascend hereafter from this desert and exile to my God, filled with grace and leaning upon thee, my Jesus, the only object of my love. O my dear Jesus, you have drawn me from the world with a strong and compassionate hand; you gave me the wings of the dove, to fly and hide from its dangerous distractions; grant me that eye of simplicity which sees no other object than you, and that pure and languishing heart which loves and incessantly yearns for you.

This holy state demands great sanctity and prefection, and no matter from what quarter I view it, I feel fully persuaded that I ought to live in the uninterrupted practice of every religious and Christian virtue. If monasteries are a species of spiritual sepulchres, I as one dead ought to be buried in one, never more to move in worldly affairs, but to compassionate it, to pray for its conversion, and to weep for the faults I committed when following its maxims. I shall be most happy if the world will forget me, as one already dead, and that it prays for me as one departed, provided I come forth hereafter from my sepulchre glorious and immortal.

My Lord Jesus, you know that I selected solitude as a port of refuge, to escape the hidden rocks and breakers on life's ocean, and also to secure myself against the storms and tempests always raging there. I can never recall these dangers without weeping, and I dread to encounter them in my solitude, particularly when I remember that St. Paul assures me that it is so. O my Jesus and my God, can it be possible that I can be a shipwreck and a castaway in the very harbour itself? I certainly shall, dear Lord, if I depend on my own strength, and not entirely on you, and if I do not labour to divest myself of all selfishness, and live only for you.

Preserve me, dear Lord, from ever becoming dissatisfied with my

holy and retired state; save me from lassitude, sadness, indifference, dissipation, and any desire to see that world which we never can absolutely exile from our homes. Its addresses should always be dreaded, and rarely does it depart without leaving some vestige of its presence behind. Our monasteries are like so many islands encompassed by a mighty ocean; the furious element will abstract the land, by little and little, from these islands; and if not checked by powerful embankments, will burst through and submerge them. Hold back, O Lord, those waves and billows, that we may find all our comfort in you alone, that, like you, we can say we are not alone, that our Father is always with us, and that hence the whole world may abandon us, because your presence is more than sufficient for us, and more than fills the places of them all.

Hide us, dear Jesus, in your holy tabernacle, where we can meditate on your law, where we can prepare for death, and anticipate the rigours of God's judgments, and where we can so exalt ourselves from this earth as to contemplate the glories of the eternal city. What happy homes those tabernacles make, and what grand advantages for salvation do they not possess? In those happy homes my heart and soul bound with joy towards the living God, the only object of my desires. This tabernacle or monastery is the holy mountain, the hallowed altar on which I desire to offer up my sacrifice, far away from the din and bustle of this world. Be my pastor, dear Jesus, in this blessed retreat; be my spiritual food, and conduct me to any place you wish; call me up into the mountain, as you did Moses, to receive your law into my heart, and converse with you face to face.

Conduct me sometimes to Thabor, where I can hear your heavenly Father saying: "Hear ye Him!" and where your glories, your beauties, your grandeur, and all you are will shine out on me; and sometimes lead me up the rugged heights of Calvary to participate in your sufferings, and to prove me by the privations you may wish me to feel and suffer. O eternal Word, hide me in the bosom of your eternal Father, where you have been from eternity, that, like you, and in union with you, I can contemplate, and love, and unceasingly admire His infinite beauty and grandeur. Complete what you begun in me, so that I may never be separated from you. My solitude shall be an ever-genial sunshine to me, provided you always dwell in it with me, and that I live and die in your holy and blessed society. Amen.

CHAPTER XII.

ON JESUS, THE FATHER OF CHRISTIANS.

ALTHOUGH the title of Father of Christians is applicable to the three divine persons of the Most Holy Trinity, and although it is applied in a special manner to the first person when we say the Lord's Prayer, still the amiable character of father is given to Jesus for many reasons mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures.

We were born from His side, opened by a spear on the cross, and we were baptised through His merits and death; and hence St. Augustine says that the faithful have been baptised and have become members of the Church by the water and blood which flowed from His sacred side on the cross. He instituted the holy sacraments, and through them we receive a new, a supernatural, and a divine existence, and we are created new creatures from the nothingness of mortal sin, through Jesus Christ. He is called by the prophet Isaias, "the Father of future ages;"[1] and St. Paul, quoting from the Old Testament, says that Jesus presented Himself to His Father and said: "I and my children, whom God hath given to me;"[2] and hence we see that Jesus can be called appropriately and in a special manner our Father. How happy we shall be if we always truly consider Him our Father, and if we always carry with true dignity the title of His children.

Therefore we will consider two points in this chapter—1st. How grand and exalted is this title of child of God. And 2nd. How the greatest part of Christians dishonour it. Is he greatly exalted who receives the title of child of God?

Nothing could be conceived more dignified than to be a child of God, and hence what greater mercy and goodness could be conceived on the part of God than to elevate man, who was His enemy and the slave of the devil, to an honour so exalted as to not only call him His child, but to really make him so? And St. Augustine says that "the grandest work of God's wisdom and love is Jesus, God and man, because the Son of God became the Son of man; and the next grandest, after this first and most perfect work of His hands, is that the children of men became the children of God."

There are three reasons to show how august and exalted is this title of child of God. The first is taken from the principle and manner by which we became the children of God; the second is

[1] Isaias, ix. 6. [2] Heb. ii. 13.

taken from the great obligations the character of child of God imposes on him who received it; and the third on account of the great benefits and prerogatives conferred on him who bears that noble dignity. Therefore we will develop and briefly explain those three reasons in detail.

The character of child of God had its origin from the man-God, Jesus Christ, because man had his existence from the Word, and because the Word made flesh drew man from the nothingness of sin, and made him a new creature in Himself; and hence St. John says: "As many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name."[1] Ah! how we should blush when we consider how little we know of our origin or how our affiliation was effected. Our spiritual birth has an admirable connection with that of Jesus.

He has three births—that from the bosom of His Father is eternal; and hence the prophet Isaias says: "Who shall declare His generation?"[2] and therefore by this birth He is God, the Word of God, the knowledge of God, and God's own consubstantial Son. The second birth of Jesus is a temporal one, because when the Son of God became man in the chaste womb of Mary and was born of her, the Word made flesh by this birth is a God-man, and that God-man has God for His Father and Mary, the stainless virgin, for His mother. The third birth of Jesus is that of the tomb, and it is to this birth that St. Paul applies the words of David: "You are my Son, and I have begotten you to-day;"[3] but we must remember that Jesus is born from the tomb only after His death and resurrection, and that through this birth He entered upon a state of immortality and a life teeming with glory.

Let us now make the application of the three births of Jesus to our spiritual birth. St. Paul says to the Ephesians that "God had predestined us to the adoption of the children of Jesus Christ,"[4] and hence this choice, predestination, and birth have taken place in the bosom of God Himself, and hence, like the eternal birth of the Word, all three were eternally hidden in God. This birth came to light when it pleased the Lord to regenerate us at the baptismal font before the rest of mankind; and hence we were born children of God in time through this sacrament; and this birth has an admirable conformity and resemblance to the second birth of Jesus, when born of the most holy Mary; and, oh, how we should praise and bless the Lord for this exalted honour. Jesus was born of Mary a man-God, and we are born children of God by baptism; and hence St. John

[1] John, i. 12. [2] Isaias, liii. 8. [3] Psalms, ii. 7. [4] Ephes. i. 5.

says: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spiritual."[1] By this sacrament we become participators of the divine nature, and as we became children of man by partaking of the nature and substance of man, so also we became children of God by participation of the spirit and the divinity of Jesus. There is one difference, however, that the nature of God is His substance and Himself, but this grand and precious character in man is only a grace and a created work; because the nature of God is simple and indivisible, and hence cannot be communicated to us; and, therefore, we should never forget this heavenly Father, who gave us a new being and affiliation through the ministry of our holy mother the Church. Adam and Eve brought forth children to die, because, says St. Augustine, they themselves were mortal; but Jesus and the Church bring forth children for eternal life, because both are eternal; our fathers according to the flesh bring forth carnal children only, because themselves are carnal; but Jesus, our Father, and the Church, our mother, bring forth spiritual children, because both are spiritual. The third birth of Jesus is that of the tomb.

This divine Saviour became Father of Christians through the sacrament of penance, because when they ceased to be children of God by sin, they regained their lost character by this sacrament, because there Jesus becomes a species of resurrection to them by giving them grace to bury their sins in the tribunal of penance as if in a tomb, and by aiding them to undergo the salutary penances and austerities which that holy sacrament obliges them to perform. Therefore, the omnipotent grace of God is the cause of our spiritual resurrection; through it we live a life entirely new, and through it we regain our lost rights and character of children of God. After this, Jesus speaks to us the words addressed to Him by His Father after His resurrection: "You are my Son, I have begotten you to-day;" but this birth will be perfect only on the last day, when we will come forth glorious and immortal from the tomb, no longer subject to sin or infirmity, but full of the effects of our divine adoption. When we became the children of God, we never could conceive how highly we were exalted, because we received then the greatest grace a reasonable being could receive on this earth, and because nothing in this world is comparable to the sublime character of child of God.

Why does this distinction of child of God so exalt a Christian man as to make him the bearer of the grandest gift he could possess in this world?

[1] John, iii. 6.

Man was plunged by sin into the lowest and most abject state which could possibly be conceived, because he fell from the sublime state of original innocence into the abode of all the impure spirits, where he became the slave of Satan. But God raises him up by baptism from this terrible degradation to such sublime grandeur as man could not possibly comprehend, for the character of child of God is grander, more noble, lasting, and august than all those worldly treasures in which men place their glory.

No matter how numerous and grand may be the honours of royalty, or the privileges of kings, princes, and emperors, all of them combined are not comparable to the dignity of child of God, because all those created distinctions are crumbling and passing away like the animated tenement they belong to; but the character of child of God lives for ever, and makes those glorious and immortal who are invested with it, and who preserve it faithfully to the end. The character of king makes a man master of a small part only of this world, which, in time, he must surrender; but the character of child of God gives its possessor a right to an eternal and never-ending kingdom in heaven.

The title of emperor gives a man a right for life to certain perishable goods, but the title of child of God gives us a right to the graces and blessings of Christ, our Father. Earthly kings only aspire to imitate, or at most to surpass, a Cæsar or an Alexander; but the yearnings of the child of God imitate the king and ruler of the heavens and the earth, and this is the very hope the word of God holds out to us, for St. John says in his first epistle: "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, and we shall see Him as He is."[1] The soul, says St. Cyprian, invested with the divine character of baptism, is grander and more sublime than all the precious and valuable things of this world, because it is so associated and united to Jesus, as to make only one Son of God with Him, and consequently to reign conjointly with Him. The blood of the Lamb is the royal robe which covers that soul; it is priest with Christ, and the sacerdotal vestments upon it are the merits and the virtues of the man-God. Who then can charge Christians with obscurity of birth or lowliness of character, since they originated from the bosom of God, and are by grace something like what Jesus is by nature; and hence the grandeur and elevation of the children of God over all earthly kings and potentates is supremely superior.

By baptism we become associated with the three persons of the

[1] 1 Ep. iii. 2.

Most Holy Trinity, because being baptised in their name, we become so united to them that the Father calls us His children, the Son His brothers, and the Holy Ghost His spouses; and hence St. Paul says that "the Father has given us His Son, and in giving Him He has given all things with Him;" and as this Son has become our chief and made us members of Himself, the eternal Father regards us so united and incorporated to this Son as to make only one Son of God with Him.

Baptism associates us so closely to Jesus that our bodies enter into a unity with His, because the members of our bodies are members of His, and we have entered into a unity of heart and soul with Him as well, because He gave us His own tendencies, and, so much so, that we think and judge as He does, we love only what He loves, and we hold in horror what He detests and condemns; and we enter into a unity of goods with Him, because He gives us His merits, His body, His soul, His divinity, and all that He is, and hence St. John says: "I am in them and they are in me, that they may be made perfect in one."[1] Could there be any union grander than this? The Holy Ghost communicates Himself to us in order to be our guide, He stimulates us to act, He helps us to overcome our weaknesses, and becomes the soul of our soul; because we are His temple, He dwells in us, sanctifies and consecrates us. Oh, what great honours and graces are attached to this grand character of child of God! Could we have sufficient love and gratitude for the Most Holy Trinity, that so much loved us as to send the same Holy Ghost on our baptism that was sent upon that of His divine Son? And when we are sanctified in its salutary waters, this eternal Father looks upon us and loves us in His Son, and says as He said to Him: "This is my well-beloved son in whom I have placed my affection."

The grace of adoption is preferable to all the supernatural gifts given by God to man, and greater even than all concentrated in one man, because the gifts of prophecy, of miracles, of languages, and of healing all diseases, if united in one man, are very small compared with the honour of being the child of God; and hence St. Augustine says: "That if it were possible for the Queen of Heaven to be the Mother of God before she became the child of God, her dignity would be in that impossible supposition less than the adopted child of God."[2] Therefore, we should begin to meditate to-day on the grace of our spiritual birth, and to think seriously and well on the august character we bear.

[1] John, xvii. 23.

[2] His book on Virginity.

"Behold," says St. John in his first epistle, "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God."[1] Oh, how highly should the great ones of this world esteem this divine adoption, those who admire and hunt after transitory things, who see nothing grand but the nobility they inherit from their ancestors, and who have no consideration at all for the nobility and character of the child of God. How happy the poor, who are the children of God, must feel if they live according to the maxims of their character, since the most despised amongst them are more exalted before God than the princes of this world, who are his enemies. How much the poor children of Jesus should be comforted when they reflect that He is their Father, and hence, as His children, they have a right to hope for all they want from this Father so good and powerful; and therefore we should never again speak of earthly dignities, honours, principalities, or distinctions, however grand they may be, because none of these, nor all of them combined, can be comparable to the dignity of the child of God.

What is the second reason that makes us understand how grand and exalted is the dignity of child of God?

This reason is taken from the heavy obligations the dignity of child of God imposes on us, and we must remember that if we are the children of Jesus we must as a consequence fulfil all the duties attached to it. The first and most important obligation is to live a life exempt from every crime, because a life of grace carries us on continually to sanctity and to an estrangement from every sin; and hence St. John says in his first epistle: "Whosoever is born of God committeth not sin, for the grace of God, like a divine seed, abideth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God;"[2] and hence a Christian can never be too guarded against everything which could in the least tarnish a soul which has become the child of God and the temple of the Holy Ghost. There is no state or occupation able to debase the child of God, and make him unworthy of his high character, except the state and degradation of mortal sin. Humiliations, works of charity, trials, crosses, and other visitations, never can injure the child of God, but, on the contrary, they help to increase his glory. But blasphemies, impurities, and lies, envy, vanities, and vengeance, ambition, and all suggestions coming from concupiscence, are the deeds which lower and degrade the child of God.

Every Christian should know, and remember well, that he has two births within him—one from the old man of sin to an effeminate life, to

[1] 1 Ep. iii. 1. [2] 1 Ep. iii. 9.

all the enjoyments which please the flesh, and to all those pleasures which flatter the senses ; but by the divine birth which the new man of grace causes in us, we are carried away to mortifications, penances, trials, labours, and crosses. By the birth of the flesh, which the old man of sin originated in us, we have a strong inclination to everything worldly, such as sports, vain amusements, pride, pomp, dissipation, entertainments, and everything calculated to distinguish and elevate us above the common people ; but by the spiritual birth, formed within us by the new man of grace, we are animated to combat the world ; and hence St. John says : "Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world."[1]

The sacrament of baptism, which makes us children of God, obliges us to this combat and to this estrangement from the world, and hence the Council of Paris says that "the pomps we there renounced are the same as those of the world," such as ambition, arrogance, vainglory, a superfluity of everything we make use of, and which people call indispensably necessary, but which in reality increases our pride and all the vices springing from it, such as expensive furniture, costly dresses, a magnificent table, too many servants, a lofty bearing, vainglorious and pompous language, and that contemptible disregard which we manifest for all above us, in order to humble them and exalt ourselves.

What are the other obligations which the character of child of Jesus imposes on us? The next obligation which our heavenly Father demands from us, His children, is to serve Him through love and not for mercenary motives, as if we were still slaves dreading punishment, and hoping for gain, and not for God Himself. We have not received the spirit of servitude at our baptism, but that of adoption, which is the spirit of love and charity, that holy spirit which fills the soul with a thorough contempt for all worldly goods, and for all the temporal evils which may assail or afflict us. This is the kind of love our heavenly Father demands, this is the love which makes us perform with pleasure whatsoever He desires ; it is He alone that true love seeks and yearns for, and it is He alone that promised and will recompense it.

The next obligation of the child of God is to imitate Jesus, and to conform his life to that which He led here upon earth. We must let the world as well as God see that we are the children of Christ, and the best evidence we could give of this would be the sanctity of our lives and a desire to produce good works, for it was in that way that

[1] 1 EP. v. 4.

Jesus proved to the Jews that He was the Son of God, and hence St. John says: "The works which I do in the name of my Father give testimony of me;"[1] and, therefore, the life of the child of God should be so regulated, that the life of Christ should be visible in it. Although this last obligation embraces all the other duties of the child of God, it will be useful to consider, and give in detail, all we bind ourselves to in baptism.

A contract has been made between Jesus and us in this sacrament when He says: "I will be their Father, and they will be my sons and daughters." By virtue of this sacred vow and engagement, we promised to renounce Satan, to wage a never-ceasing war upon him, to resist his temptations, and never to be found beneath his banner. We are bound by this contract to renounce all his works—that is, all kinds of sin, particularly pride, falsehood, hatred, and voluptuousness, which are the chief works of the devil; and this is the condition on which Jesus admits us into the number of His children.

We promised also to cling to Jesus as our only good, to follow Him always, to observe His precepts, to adopt the holy gospel as the rule of our conduct; and as we are baptised in the death of Christ, we ought to represent His death by a life so mortified as to be dead to everything in this world. These promises are so obligatory that no power can dispense us from them, and they are so important that we must fulfil them or perish for ever; they embrace all persons without distinction of time, or place, or sex, or state, or condition; they are so just and reasonable that they aid us to discharge our duties to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves; they are so holy that they instruct man how to detach himself from creatures and to use them only as things needful, and to cling to Jesus whom we had chosen when we renounced our enemy, the devil.

These promises are so solemn, that the holy fathers call them the great Christian vows, made in the presence of the most Holy Trinity, before God's ministers at the altar, and given to the keeping of his holy angels, who carried them up to heaven to present them to God in behalf of all the baptised—that is, for all who received the august title of child of God; and hence we must never forget the conditions of the alliance we contracted with Jesus at our baptism by virtue of which He became our father, and we became His children.

What is the third reason why the character of child of God is so great and exalted?

The third reason is derived from the great prerogatives and

[1] John, x. 25.

blessings gained by those who really are the children of Jesus, and whose lives correspond with the noble character they bear. Jesus regards all those as His children, and, at the same time, as His natural and legitimate heirs, and, consequently, He gives them a right over all His goods, and He cares and protects them in a very special manner.

In order to explain the first advantage, we must necessarily suppose that everything in this world, and all the goods men possess, belong to Jesus, because He is the Son of God, and because as such all things were made by Him. St. Paul says that the Father "established Him heir of all things;"[1] and St. John says: "The Father placed all things in His hands;"[2] therefore, Jesus is the Sovereign Master of all temporal, spiritual, and eternal goods, and no one can contest His right, because His dominion over them is established on account of His character as Son of God, the figure of His Father's substance in all things; and His right over all things is established on the words of God so clearly expressed in the Sacred Scriptures. But the omnipotence and mercy of God have procured further advantages for us, because if the spirit of adoption continues in us, we have a continued right, by reason of that grace, over all the goods of our Father.

We have a right over all temporal goods, because the sinner who rebelled against his Father, who lost his character of child of God by his crimes, and who is in consequence His enemy, has made himself unworthy of anything, and no longer merits any good; and hence we can well say that none but those who belong to Jesus, and who consequently make only one Son of God with Him, have any right over those goods—a right which they acquired by the labours, the sufferings, and the death of Jesus, their Father; and yet the impious and the wicked sometimes abundantly possess the goods of this world, whilst the just are often in poverty, in contempt, and in want of all things. But we shall fully comprehend hereafter in heaven the reasons why Providence so distributed the goods of this world; and, judging things by the principles of religion, we can say, in a certain sense, that the wicked possess unjustly the things of this world because they made themselves unworthy of them by their crimes.

We can say, in addition, that if God permits the wicked to be rich in worldly goods, it is to attract them to Him by the recollection of His goodness to them, or to punish them as His enemies by

[1] Heb. i. 2. [2] John, iii. 35.

giving them the desires of their hearts; and if He sometimes deprive the just of worldly goods, they have an example in Jesus how to bear their privations, and to make them understand that as His kingdom was not of this world, neither should theirs, and that the spiritual goods He has reserved for them are grander and more befitting their character as children of God.

The spiritual goods of Jesus are His words, His graces, His spirit, His sacraments, His body, His cross, and His mysteries. He left us His word, because He said: "My Father, I gave them the words which thou gavest to me;"[1] and this is the word which the prophet esteems as more precious than gold or silver, the word that teaches all God has done for us; this is the word, in fine, which enlightens our souls and nourishes our hearts, which strengthens us against our enemies, and contains all the comfort of the children of God. He gives His children the spiritual goods of His grace to enlighten them, to draw them to goodness, to help them to do good, to strengthen them when they are weak, and to make them love and practise all that God commands them. He gives them His spirit, and it was through this spirit, dwelling in them as in a temple, that they received the title of His children; and this spirit lives in them as a spirit of truth, of sanctity, and of charity; and God leaves it in them as a pledge and promise of the heavenly inheritance He has in store for them. He left them His sacraments to give them the character of His children, to recover it when they lose it, and to cherish and make it more perfect as long as they possess it. He left them His body in the adorable Eucharist to be the bread of His children, to feed and strengthen themselves with it, and to be a continual pledge of a life divine, and of their Father's love for them. He left them His mysteries to feed their faith, to animate their hope, and to make their charity more ardent still. He left them His cross to carry, and to love it as He did, to place all their glory in it, and to regard it as the only means to secure the possession of eternal life.

The children of God have a right to the eternal goods which Christ has gone to prepare for them, and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "And if sons, heirs also—heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ,"[2] and, therefore, we shall have part in His glory and in His kingdom. Let us not lose this right to glory given to us by our Father, let us not imitate the foolish and profane Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, let us avoid the crimes and

[1] John, xvii. 8. [2] Rom. viii. 17.

murmurings of the Israelites, to whom God promised the land of Canaan, and from which they were excluded on account of their disobedience.

What is the next prerogative of the children of God? It consists in the singular protection and paternal care Christ has for His children, both of which are evidenced so often in the Sacred Scriptures. Christ loves His own children in a special manner, and this love embraces all their spiritual and temporal necessities, and He expresses the tenderness of His affection for us when He says: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb; and if she should forget, I will not forget thee;"[1] and hence we see the love of Jesus for His children and the care He takes of them.

How do we dishonour the character of the child of God?

We dishonour it by a bad and criminal life, by our ingratitude to Him who made us His children, by forgetting who we are, and in being ashamed to live in conformity with the glorious title we bear.

Nothing so much dishonours a child of God as a base and criminal life, because everything in him ought to be holy, grand, and becoming the Father whose child he is, and because all his desires and actions ought to bear the impress of that God with whom he is so intimately associated. The children of God are not dishonoured by crosses, humiliations, or poverty; because these, on the contrary, should constitute their pride and their glory. Sin alone dishonours the child of God, debases him and draws him down to the level of the brute beast. We have a salient proof of this in the conduct of the prodigal son, who was reduced from riches and happiness to extreme misery, and who was obliged to herd swine, and even to eat their food; so, too, when the child of God becomes the slave of his shameful passions and of his enemy the devil, he is stripped of his high prerogatives and becomes the willing slave of a vile and debasing servitude. What a strange humiliation!

What would we think of the blind and degrading conduct of a king's son who departs from his father's palace, abandons himself to all kinds of excesses, becomes the slave of the meanest of his father's subjects—a subject whom he should command on account of his royal birth—and who is obliged to perform actions the lowest and most dishonouring his dignity; and yet we do all this when we fall into sin. Through that sin we depart from our Father, Jesus Christ; we forsake all our riches and happiness, and even our right to eternal glory, to become slaves to a demon whom we should command; and

[1] Isaias, xlix. 15.

whilst thus enslaved we seek ardently after earthly goods, and pleasures which are viler and more contemptible than dung; and so lowly are we fallen, and so black and filthy have we become, that we can no longer discover the smallest spot of that noble character of child of God, which once so highly adorned us.

We resemble in this fallen state the Israelites returned from their captivity, who could not point out the house of their fathers, nor prove that they were the children of Israel. Worldlings can never show any evidences of the sacred character of the child of God, because they are stripped of all their heavenly grandeur, their modesty, humility, patience, meekness, and other virtues, and because they dishonour that holy character by a base and criminal life, and hence can only appear invested with the crimes and characters of the beast.

We dishonour this character of child of God by ingratitude, and hence Isaias says: "I have brought up children and exalted them, and they despised me."[1] Jesus can say the same to us, because after giving us a new birth in baptism He brings us into His Church, and He did so in a manner befitting our character as children of God; and then He nourished us with His word, His grace, His body and His blood. He gave us precepts to regulate and sanctify our lives and to gain eternal happiness; but through a horrible ingratitude and forgetfulness of those graces and the love of Jesus, our Father, we go so far as to ridicule and despise Him, and very often to take up arms against Him. We thus imitate the rebellion of the perfidious Absalom against his father David—a revolt which pained him much more sensibly than the outrages he received from his servant Semei, and which sorrow he expressed in the following words: "Behold my son, who came forth from my bowels, seeketh my life, and how much more now Semei."[2] So, likewise, Jesus can speak of His children, and it is no wonder that pagans and strangers should declare war against Him when His own children, who are partakers of His nature and are regenerated in His blood, offend and persecute Him; and now we can understand that the sins of Christians pain the heart of Christ much more keenly, and offend Him much more deeply, than the worst crimes of pagans.

We dishonour the character of the child of God when we have not the moral courage to declare we are His children. What a disgrace! We glory in worldly distinctions which elevate us only a little above our fellows, and we blush and are often ashamed to declare openly that we are the children of our crucified Saviour, and

[1] Isaias, i. 2. [2] 2 Kings, xvi. 11.

to give Him thanks for numbering us amongst His children. Could any man conceive an honour so glorious as to have the saints of the Old and New Law as his ancestors. Could he imagine any distinction half so exalted as to be able to trace his origin from the bosom of Jesus and the Trinity, where he had been conceived from eternity? Therefore, far from blushing at the title of Christian, we should glory in wearing its noble badges; and far from being ashamed of the precepts made for us by our Father, we should openly and zealously observe them, and courageously practise them. Let us, therefore, take care that no human fear or respect shall ever prevent us from confessing Christ openly, lest at the hour of death we should find ourselves no longer called or recognised as His dear and beloved children.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, FATHER OF CHRISTIANS.

O my dear Jesus, what extraordinary love you manifested for me by wishing me not only to be called, but really and truly to be your child, although by my corporal birth I am a child of wrath and worthy only of hell. O my dear Jesus, I never can sufficiently admire your power and goodness, because you conceived me from eternity in the bosom of your Father, you predestined me to receive in time the divine adoption, and you made me a new creature, because you gave me a new existence when you gave me grace which exalts me above everything great in this world, a grace which associates me in an ineffable manner with the three divine persons, a grace which makes me a partaker of the divine nature, and which makes me even the son of God with you. What benefit would it be to me to be extracted from nothingness and born into this world if I were not regenerated afterwards by water and the spirit, and thus the new man created in me.

What are men, no matter how highly esteemed by this world, if they have not the spirit of adoption, rather than the spirit of Satan which appears to operate in them? Ah, dear Lord, how deeply I am indebted to you for giving me the grace to become your child, and to what perfection am I not obliged on account of this august and sublime title? How ardent my love for you should be, and how great should be my contempt for this world and its pleasures, which I renounced at my baptism; and with what horror should I not regard sin, which robs me of the noble character of child of God? When I reflect, dear Lord, on the life I am and have been leading, I feel

ashamed to call myself your child, because I see how much I have fallen from my dignity, how much I have degenerated from my divine adoption, and how I debased myself by offending you; and yet, my merciful Saviour, you assure me that if I return to you, I shall find a forgiving Father in you.

What patience, tenderness, and goodness you have shown to a child so ungrateful and rebellious as I have been to you. I confess, dear Father, that I have a horror of the state I am in; my wretchedness is extreme, because I squandered all the blessings you gave me; I am devoured with want, and I can remain no longer amongst filthy beasts eating their leavings, and enslaved by the devil. It is time for me to arise from my bondage, and to come forth from my sinful state; but how, my God and my Father, will I dare to appear before you without a single trace of my former character of your child? Will you, beloved Redeemer, recognise me stripped of the white robes of my innocence, and clothed in the tattered raiment of sin? But when I reflect on your great mercy, I begin to hope; because I know I am the child of your sorrows, I know that you merited for me on the cross the grace to be your child; and hence I feel that your love for me will make you forget all my ingratitude.

Therefore, I come to prostrate myself at your feet, and to tell you, with an humble and contrite heart, that "I have sinned before heaven and you," that I merit no longer to be called your son, that I am unworthy of your graces or of any of the goods of your house, and that I shall be most happy if you permit me to pass the remainder of my days in tears of sorrow and penitential regret. O Father of mercy, pardon me, and as you have allowed me to live so near to you, and even in your very house, forgive, I beseech you, all I have sinned against you. O holy and merciful Father and eternal Lord, I am ready to repent, to obey, and to love you as my Father. I do not desire nor esteem any other goods but those you bequeathed to me—namely, your word, your grace, your spirit, and your cross, your body, and the everlasting blessings you promised me. These riches appear grander and more precious to me than all the glories of this world, because the goods of this world never could enrich my soul, and hence you alone, my Father, you alone are the only blessing I desire in time and eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON JESUS, AS KING OF CHRISTIANS.

One of the most august titles which the prophets gave to Jesus was that of king, whose sway should be over all nations, and whose kingdom would be eternal; and the prophet Micheas foretold this fact when he said: "And thou Bethlehem Ephrata art a little one amongst the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel; and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity;"[1] and St. John says in his Apocalypse: "And He hath on His garment and on His thigh written King of Kings and Lord of Lords."[2] All the prophets represented Him as a powerful, a wise, a just, and a merciful king; and the prophet Zacharias proved all this when he foretold to the Jewish people in what way the Messiah was to appear: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion," he said; "shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold thy king will come to thee, the just and saviour. He is poor and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."[3]

Could we desire a clearer prophecy on this point than that just mentioned, and could it be more evidently fulfilled than Christ made it when He entered Jerusalem riding on an ass, and at once verifying the prophecy of His coming, and illustrating the meekness and poverty of His character? How deplorably blind the Jews were when they rejected Him, and accused Him of usurpation because He said He was their king. They allowed themselves to be deceived by His poverty, because their vanity and worldly love made them expect that the Messiah would be an earthly monarch of great fame, wealth, and renown, and consequently encompassed with great splendour and glory. We should regard Him as our true and only king, because He is God and man, and He is so on account of the hypostatic union with our frail nature; and the angel Gabriel announced this truth to the Blessed Virgin on the incarnation day when he said: "The Lord God shall give Him the throne of David his father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever."[4] He has sovereign authority as God over all men and all things, and He merited by His incarnation, death, and other mysteries to reign as the man-God over the entire universe, and He taught this truth Himself when He said: "All in heaven and on earth had been given unto Him." And hence pagans, infidels, and the wise ones of this world, were forced to

[1] Micheas, v. 2. [2] Apoc. xix. 16. [3] Zach. ix. 9. [4] Luke, i. 32.

receive and adore Him as their sovereign king, because they gloried to seek Him, to tender Him their homage, and even to adore Him as their true king in the wretched and roofless stable at Bethlehem. We will now consider five points touching the character of Christ as king. 1st. What is His kingdom, and how does He reign. 2nd. What is the difference between His kingdom and those of this world. 3rd. In what consists the grandeur and glory of His kingdom. 4th. How unreasonable and unjust men are in rejecting this kingdom and refusing to be ruled by their true king. 5th. How long His kingdom is to last in heaven and on earth.

1st. Jesus holds a supreme sovereignty over this earth, because His kingdom has no limits like those of earthly kings; His kingdom is boundless and stretches from the beginning to the end of the universe. He is King of all kings, because by Him kings reign, and because He can deprive them of their crowns, and give them to whom He pleases. His sovereignty is from eternity, and He reigns over all places— over the heavens, the earth, and hell—because His Father has given all things into His hands. His dominion extends over the souls, the bodies, and the goods of mankind; and as He has a sovereign right to all things, He can dispose of all just as He wishes. Jesus is that awful and omnipotent King who holds all creation in His hands, and who balances this vast universe on His finger's end; and hence holy David says: "The Lord is a great God and a great King over all kings, for in His hands are the ends of the earth, and the heights of the mountains are His; the sea is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the dry land;"[1] and all creatures pay Him homage, and are subject either to His power, His justice, or His mercy.

By His power He can do as He pleases with all His creatures, both men, and angels, and elements, and animals; because His Father placed all as a footstool beneath His feet. By His justice He reigns over the wicked and the reprobate, and uses animate and inanimate creatures to subjugate and punish them. He reigns over the just and the elect by His mercy, and uses this world to manifest His goodness to them. The reign of Christ has been significantly predicted by holy David when he said: "He shall rule from sea to sea, and from the river to the end of the earth; before Him the Ethiopians shall fall down, and His enemies shall lick the ground. The kings of Tharsis and the islands shall offer presents; the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts. All the kings of the earth shall adore Him, and all

[1] Psalms, xciv. 3, 4, 5.

nations shall serve Him."[1] Again, says holy David: "The Lord hath prepared His throne in heaven, and His kingdom shall rule over all,"[2] and the prophet Isaias says: "Peoples and kingdoms who will not subject themselves to Him shall all perish, and He will make a frightful desert of those nations, and all the kingdoms of the earth shall know that there is no other Lord or King than He."[3] Let us adore this omnipotent king with due submission and respect whilst He rules over this vast universe; for as He governs all things and as nothing happens by chance, it follows that all which happens in this world should make us fear His justice, love His mercy, and regard His power with obedience and respect.

The Church, and all Christians sanctified by His Grace, constitute the true kingdom in which Jesus reigns, and which He acquired by His sufferings and death. But in order to comprehend this fact, we must remember that man, while in a state of innocence, desired to rule and to be like God; and hence he revolted against the dominion and empire which God rightly had over His soul and body; and therefore He allowed him to subject himself to the power of Satan, whom he so freely obeyed; and hence Satan became prince of this world on account of man's pride and sin. When this spirit of malice and darkness found man stripped of his original justice and innocence, and cut off like himself from his legitimate Sovereign, he made him his slave; but Jesus came into this world to recover this kingdom and to emancipate man from the power of a demon who so long tyrannised over him. Jesus is like that man of noble birth mentioned in the gospel, who went to a far-off country to take possession of a kingdom, and then returned whence he came; because in coming down upon this earth to become man and to die on the cross, He descended to a far-off country, He began to take possession of His kingdom at His incarnation, at His ascension He returned to His Father from whom He came, and He continues from His throne in heaven to rule His kingdom here on earth.

As long as this divine Saviour remained upon this earth, He laboured to bring into His kingdom the subjects Satan had seduced, and amongst the number He brought in was a Matthew, a Magdalen, a Zacheus, and a Samaritan; and the arms He chiefly employed to win His victory and conquer His great enemy were the opprobriums, the humiliations, the sufferings, and the terrible death He endured. When the Jews saw how miraculously He multiplied the loaves in the desert, they wished to make Him their king; but He fled from

[1] Psalms, lxxi. 8, 9, 10, 11. [2] Psalms, cii. 19. [3] Isaias, ix. 9; xxxvii. 20.

this honour, because He did not wish to hear Himself proclaimed king by a people who, after so many proofs of His omnipotence, regarded Him as powerless, and treated Him as the last of mankind. When His death was at hand, which He looked upon as the day of His triumph over the devil, He declared Himself king, and then He used those remarkable words: "Now the prince of this world shall be cast out." As if He had said, I will not declare myself king till the time of my crucifixion has arrived, till I am covered with opprobrium and treated as a mock king; when the most heartless outrages shall be heaped upon me, and when I am reduced to the extremest misery, weakness, and humiliation. When Pilate asked Him if He were king, He publicly declared that He was; and even the Jews were proclaiming Him king whilst crowning Him with thorns, when putting a reed into His hand as a sceptre of royalty, when they covered His divine countenance with spittle and, through derision, saluted Him king; and thus they were unconsciously accomplishing the designs of His Father, who wished His Son to reign through sufferings and humiliations; and Pilate was accomplishing those designs as well when he condemned Him to the ignominious death of the cross, and ordered the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin title, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, to be nailed to the cross over His head.

It was by the cross, as the Church sings in her office, that Christ reigned, by it He triumphed over the Jews and Gentiles, and through it He made them come forth from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. Through Jesus crucified, the cross became a subject of scandal to the Jews and a folly to the Gentiles; through it the apostles conquered the devil, subjugated the most barbarous nations to His empire, and that peoples regard it now as the wisdom and power of God. "The kings of this earth rose up in vain, and princes conspired against the Lord and His Christ."[1] They wished in vain to burst the chains with which the Lord desired to bind them, because in spite of all their efforts the Lord established Him over Sion, His holy mountain, to publish His precepts and ordinances. He reigns over His Church, the true Sion, because He governs it, sustains it, and defends it against all its enemies.

Will you explain still more in detail how Jesus reigns over souls subject to Him? Jesus established His reign in our hearts by the power of His grace; by it He rescues sinners from the hands of the prince of darkness, and transfers them into His own kingdom; by it,

[1] Psalms, ii. 2.

as with a strong army, He carried away all His spoils; by it the devil is forced to depart from the hearts of those he possesses, and the divine Saviour, like a victorious king, enters them, becomes master of them, establishes His throne there, commands and reigns there, and as the prophet David, speaking of Him, says, "With thy comeliness and thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously, and reign because of truth, and meekness, and justice, and thy right hand shall conduct thee wonderfully."[1] Here He points out the way He makes Himself master of souls, and how He establishes His kingdom through the ministry of truth, meekness, and justice. Why does He employ those three virtues? Because, generally speaking, the devil reigns in souls by the false splendour of this world, by error, by the pleasures of the senses, and by injustice. And what does Jesus do? He opposes His majesty and beauty to the false glitter of the world and of creatures; and when the soul is thoroughly penetrated with them, she no longer admires human grandeur. To error, illusion, and all false principles He opposes His truth, He makes this truth known and loved, and when the soul is illumined with this divine light and enamoured with this love, she renounces error and subjects herself to the faith. To the pleasures of the senses He opposes the sweetness and the unction of grace, and those make the soul reject and despise all the false pleasures she before found in creatures; and hence she will exclaim with St. Augustine, "It is sweet and agreeable to me to be deprived with one blow of the false delights I formerly found in follies. I feared to lose them then, and now my great joy is to be separated from them." Instead of the injustices which the sinner commits while under the power of the devil, Jesus makes him observe His law and His precepts, which are full of justice and equity, and this is what constitutes all the beauty and sanctity of the reign of Jesus.

Ah, how we should admire and desire to see this reign established within us, and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."[2] Justice constitutes the sanctity of this kingdom, because it makes us give to God and to our neighbour what is their due; and peace and joy make all the beauty of this kingdom, because peace calms all the revolts of the passions, all inquietudes and fears, and all vain and useless desires, and because joy makes the subjects of this kingdom rejoice, as victorious soldiers in time of peace when they look upon the spoils they bore away from the enemy, and which

[1] Psalms, xliv. 5, 6. [2] Rom. xiv. 17

enables them to live and nourish themselves on the happy fruits of their labour; and this is the joy, the sweetness, and the pleasure of a soul in which Jesus reigns. It glories at seeing itself no longer under the sway of the devil, that it triumphed over him, and that it enjoys in peace the gifts it acquired through the merits of Jesus Christ; and it hopes to possess the still greater blessing of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, which are the beginning of those we shall possess in the kingdom of heaven.

Let us still further examine what constitutes the kingdom of Jesus. What is the beauty of the kingdom of Jesus? The beauties of His kingdom appear—1st. From the laws regulating it. 2nd. From the subjects dwelling in it. 3rd. From the policy and wisdom administered there. 4th. On account of the disparity between its King and earthly kings.

What are the laws of the kingdom of Jesus?

They are all combined in two—namely, that Jesus commands His subjects to avoid cupidity and to observe charity; and by strictly observing those two principal laws the subjects of this kingdom pay all the honour, respect, tribute, and obedience they owe to their sovereign, and they are able to live with each other in peace and perfect union. One of those laws, charity, constitutes all the beauty, the order, and the peace of this kingdom, because nothing conceivable could be so beautiful as to see men living according to the laws of charity. They respect their Sovereign and they love Him as the being who makes all their happiness; they obey Him and have no fear that any injustice exists in His ordinances; they all unite to give glory to their King, they pay Him a continual homage of themselves and of all they possess as emanating from His bountiful hand; and their whole desire is to live under the law of charity to please their King, and to do His will in every way. Could anything more beautiful be seen than to behold all the subjects of this King mutually loving and regarding each other as brothers and members of the same body, always ready to succour and aid one another, and even to anticipate their necessities in the bowels of mercy and compassion; continually on their guard against giving the least pain, bearing the defects and weaknesses of their brothers with patience and love, and so circumspect in their language as never to excite the passions of their associates.

Could anything be grander than to see all those subjects living in reciprocal peace and admirable concord, no disputes, quarrels, or angry words; no envy, anger, bitterness or the least ill-will; anticipating each

other in honesty, goodness, meekness, and in all the evidences of an affection which sincerely regards the afflictions and sufferings of others as their own. They are not puffed up with pride because they happen to be above their brothers in rank or dignity, but, on the contrary, they treat them with respect, and manifest a will to do them every good; they are all animated with the same spirit, and cherish the same hopes and sentiments of possessing the eternal kingdom, to be, as it were, one man in Jesus, their King, and to be consummated in a most perfect union with Him. Oh, how agreeable and grand this law of charity must be, and how happy we all shall be if we live in accordance with the rules it prescribes; because then we would see the poor relieved, the ignorant instructed, the afflicted consoled, and the wicked reproved and converted. We would see the reign of charity everywhere, and this entire kingdom united as one man and one family, well ordered and ruled; we would no longer behold the ravages of cupidity, which causes so many crimes, which Christ so emphatically condemns, and which He confined to the kingdom of the prince of darkness; but we would see that charity alone—which Christ commends and which is the principle and source of all goods and blessings—is found in the kingdom of Christ. This King punishes cupidity and recompenses charity, because His sceptre is one of right and justice; and the prophet David wishes to convey this fact when he says of Jesus: "You loved justice and hated iniquity."[1] Justice is the charity of the Christian, and cupidity is the injustice which Christ detests.

Who are the subjects of the kingdom of Christ? Nothing could be grander or more holy than the subjects of this kingdom of Christ, and these constitute the second beauty of this kingdom. Just and innocent souls are the most noble portion of it; the best and most faithful subjects are those who believe in Jesus with a lively faith—a faith that worketh by charity; those who were the poorest and most detached from this world are the richest in this kingdom, because they are filled with every grace and virtue; and the most beautiful in this kingdom are those who were the most humble in the midst of humiliations, and those who were the most patient and forbearing when assailed with outrage and contempt. The favourites of the King are those who love Him most, who had most part in His cross and in His sufferings, and who enter most into His feelings and His dispositions.

The greatest heroes of this kingdom are those who endured most torments, and who shed their blood and sacrificed their lives to

[1] Psalms, xliv. 8.

uphold the interests of Jesus, their king; and the strongest and most courageous in this kingdom are those who know and feel their own weakness, who distrust themselves, and place all their confidence in the mercy and grace of Christ. The greatest in this kingdom are those who, according to the Holy Scriptures, appear, and really are, the least in their own eyes; and the great ambition of its subjects is a life hidden and concealed from the world. All the subjects of this great King are princes of royal blood, because they are born of their King, Jesus Christ; and, what is most worthy of admiration, they are kings themselves with Jesus, and associated with Him in His royalty; and it is with this conviction that they can say with St. John in the Apocalypse: "Thou hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests, and we shall reign on the earth."[1] We are kings with Jesus when we reign over our passions, when we stand high above the things of this world by our contempt for them, and when we are united to God and submissive to all the orders of His providence.

What is the third thing that constitutes the beauty of the kingdom of Jesus?

The policy and wisdom which mark the conduct of the subjects of this kingdom make its beauty appear in a most admirable manner, because this policy does not consist and is not established like that of this world, or, as St. James says, "upon human prudence or earthly wisdom, animal and diabolical."[2] Earthly policy has its own aggrandisement as its only end, which it frequently accomplishes by secret injustice; it is animal policy when it is influence by the passions, and it is diabolical when it employs diabolical means to accomplish its designs, and hence it uses artifices, deceits, treacheries, lies, hypocrisies, violence, and calumnies to exalt itself above others, to supplant them and to establish itself on their ruin.

But the policy of the kingdom of Christ is that "which cometh from above, which is chaste,"[3] which is entirely holy, and descending from the Father of lights, and which is the friend of peace, because it avoids everything calculated to interrupt the harmony or disturb the tranquillity of society. It is moderate and equitable, because it strives to impart impartial justice to all the subjects of the kingdom, and to practise patience and sweetness to all the world. It is capable of every good, because it is predisposed to believe the good we say of others, because it does not judge, nor is is prejudiced against anyone; and because it is full of mercy and good works, it pardons injuries with facility, and is always ready to embrace with joy every occasion to do

[1] Apoc. v. 10. [2] James, iii. 15. [3] James, iii. 17.

good to the neighbour. It does not dissemble in words or conduct, is always sincere, candid, simple, undisguised, and humble, and never seeks its own interests at the cost of sincerity and charity. Oh, how amiable is such a policy, and how happy are they who associate with those who cherish and follow it.

What is the fourth thing which constitutes the beauty of the kingdom of Christ?

That which so much enriches the beauty and adorns the splendour of this kingdom is the infinite difference between Jesus as king and the kings of this world, and hence we admire and love it. Let us briefly investigate this distinction. 1st. The kings of this world are consecrated only by men and anointed only with material oil; but Jesus, as the prophet David teaches, was anointed by His Father with the plenitude of the Spirit: "Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity, therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."[1] 2nd. The kings of this earth are prone to injustice; they are generally deeply stained and even corrupted with crime; their sceptres often yield to passion and prejudice; they do not always act with integrity; they are frequently biassed by others, and for want of knowledge are often deceived by those about them. But the sceptre of Jesus is one of right and justice, and never can be deceived, because He sees all things and knows the most hidden things in the hearts of men.

3rd. The kings of this earth have not created their kingdoms; but Jesus has, and extracted His from nothing when He called this vast universe into existence. But though this first creation manifests in an admirable manner the omnipotence of its king, it is nothing compared with the second creation, which is effected by the mysteries, the death, and the grace of Jesus, which brought His kingdom from the nothingness of sin, which gave it a supernatural existence, and which causes the mercy and all the other attributes of God to shine out more brilliantly than any other of His works.

4th. No king ever subdued the entire world, and we mock the ambition of the Assyrian king, Nebuchodonosor, who conceived the foolish design of subjugating the whole world to his sway, and whose vain projects one woman, Judith, was able to frustrate and confound. Jesus is the great and only king who commands the whole world, all is subject to Him, and yields to His power, His justice, and His mercy, and His immensity rules in all parts of His states; nothing happens in His kingdom which He does not see, and

[1] Psalms, xliv. 8.

He gives evidences everywhere of His sovereign dominion over all creatures.

5th. The kings of this earth die and have to bequeath their kingdoms to others; but Jesus cannot have a successor, because He is immortal; and so far was His death from depriving Him of His kingdom, that it gave Him a grander title to it; and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "Jesus died and rose in order to rule over the living and the dead."[1]

6th. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world. The kingdoms of this world consist of pomp and state display only, and earthly kings reign by force of arms and by the severity of their laws over the bodies only of their subjects; but Jesus reigns by the power and efficacy of grace over the bodies and souls of His subjects.

7th. Earthly kings wish to be sole masters of their kingdoms, and they cannot tolerate others to reign with them; but Jesus associates His subjects with Him in His empire, because when He exalted them so highly as to make them His children, He made them participators in His royalty; and what is still more admirable, He is, by an effect of His charity, all to each of His subjects. Everything He does is done for them; He gives them His grace, His truth, His merits, His authority, and His power; and He gives them Himself, His mysteries, and all He is to enable them to fight and triumph over their enemies; and His subjects, by an admirable return of love, desire to live only for Him, to act, to suffer, and to glorify Him by their life and death.

Is the injustice of those very great who do not wish that Christ would reign in them?

No injustice could be more wicked, and no ingratitude more enormous, because He has a sovereign right to reign over them, to be served by them, and to receive their entire homage; and because He is their God and has acquired all these rights by His sufferings and death; and still, wonderful to say, there are millions who reject and abandon Him, and who prefer to subjugate themselves to the devil. This is the unfortunate condition of all under the dominion of sin, and of those who follow the irregular desires of their hearts. They reject the Lord in order that He should have no authority over them, just as the Jews did when they demanded a king from Samuel. "It is not you," said the Lord to the prophet, "that they have rejected, but Me, in order that I may not reign over them."[2] The Jews committed this injustice against Jesus when they said: "We do not wish Him to reign over us;"[3] and Christians who abandon themselves to

[1] Rom. xiv. 9. [2] 1 Kings, v. 7. [3] Luke, xix. 14.

sin commit the same crime, because they withdraw from Jesus, their good, their holy, and amiable King, whose rule is not severe and in whose service each is a king; and they choose instead the devil for their ruler, in whose service they become the sad and shameful slaves of as many passions as are ruling them.

Oh, what an ingratitude and injustice to prefer the reign of Satan, our deadliest foe, to that of Jesus, our dearest and best friend; and hence St. Luke says when time is no more Jesus will command His angels "to bring His enemies before Him, who would not have Him to reign over them, and to kill them before Him."[1] This will not be a temporal, but an eternal death; and because they would not subject themselves to His mercy and empire, they will have to do so to His avenging justice, which will deliver them to be punished eternally by the devil. Behold the frightful portion of all who will be subjects of the prince of darkness!

What kind of war are the subjects of Christ obliged to wage and to continue against their enemies?

The common condition and duty of all who are subject to Jesus is to battle without ceasing the world, the devil, and the flesh, because they are the three declared enemies of Christians, and with whom we never can be in peace. This is a most perilous war, and one in which we can be easily vanquished; and hence St. Paul exhorts us "to put on the armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil; for our wrestling," says he, "is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, and against the spirits of wickedness in the high places."[2] St. Paul points out the arms we ought to use against such formidable enemies. Truth, he says, should be the girdle of our loins; because if our hearts and souls be attached to truth, the flesh will be powerless to rule the spirit. Justice should be our breastplate, because it will protect and guard our hearts from being surprised. Faith must be our buckler, because it will enable us to extinguish all the exciting suggestions of the evil one, and to triumph over our enemies, and all that the world, the devil, and the flesh could present to us; and it will give us such grand conceptions of the only goods we should desire, the goods of eternal life, that the goods, the pleasures, and the glories of this world become contemptible in our eyes. Hope should be our helmet in this terrible warfare, because it will inspire us to place all our confidence in Jesus; it will guard our spirit and enable us to conquer all temptations to

[1] Luke, xix. 27. [2] Ephes. vi. 11, 12.

despondency, suspicion, and despair. We must use the word of God as the spiritual sword to defend ourselves against the illusions of the human spirit, and to destroy the false ideas which worldly men give us of the value of earthly things. By the power of this sword the apostles subjugated nations the most barbarous to the empire of Jesus, and triumphed over the devil, as the young David did over Goliath. It was only by His humiliations and sufferings that Jesus conquered His enemies, "and despoiling the principalities and powers, He hath led them confidently in show, triumphing openly over them in Himself."[1] So, likewise, the subjects of Christ's kingdom conquer the devil, and triumph over the world and the flesh, when they are crucified with Jesus, when they do penance, and when they labour to subdue their passions by a mortified life.

Will the kingdom of Christ last long? All other kingdoms shall be destroyed, but His kingdom will last for eternity for the following reasons:—1st. Because it is established on a foundation built by God. 2nd. Because it cannot be destroyed by any contingent power. 3rd. Because this kingdom is to continue not only on earth, but also in heaven.

1st. God has promised the eternity of this empire when he said: "Your God, O Sion, will reign through all generations."[2] "Thy kingdom is a kingdom of ages, and thy dominion endureth for ever."[3] And this promise is endorsed in a very admirable manner by the angel Gabriel when, announcing the great mystery of the Incarnation to the Blessed Virgin, he said: "And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end."[4] Behold here the immutable promise of God on which the kingdom of Christ is founded; and as nothing can change the will of God, so nothing can change His promise; and hence no power can subvert this kingdom, and if all the devils in hell should come forth and arm mankind against it, still it will live and be victorious for ever.

The gates of hell cannot prevail against it, nor can the cruelty and violence of tyrants, the cunning and subtleties of heretics, or the debased habits of Christians, ever be able to destroy or even corrupt it; because the grace, the truth, and the wisdom of Jesus, its King, are more powerful than the united strength of this world. Jesus never can be conquered by an enemy, because He acquired His kingdom by His death, and has taken possession of it by His resurrection; because the cross is the strength and power of God, and no

[1] Coloss. ii. 15. [2] Psalms, cxlv. 10. [3] Psalms, cxliv. 13. [4] Luke, i. 32, 33.

power can possibly weaken it; because His resurrection is a complete triumph over all His enemies. This great King rules His kingdom from His throne in heaven, from there He extends and makes it glorious; and when He has accomplished all His designs, the world will cease to exist; and hence St. Paul says in his first epistle to the Corinthians: "Afterwards the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom of God and the Father, when He shall have brought to nought all principalities, and power, and virtue, for He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then the Son also shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."[1]

Such is the admirable economy of religion, that the Son acquired the kingdom for His Father, He formed it by all he did, by His word, His sacraments, His grace, and His mysteries, and at the end of time He will give it to His Father, with whom it will eternally subsist in heaven. It will never again behold a revolution, nor experience any change or vicissitude, nor feel any dread from its enemies, because the great, the strong, and the immutable God will reign by Himself in the trinity of persons over all His subjects, who shall live and subsist by Him and in Him. God will make them by Himself as immortal as eternity; as the treasury of truth, He will illumine them and make them brilliant with glory; and as the fountain of all charity, He will diffuse Himself in them, and will absorb them in a union with Him, and He will be their happiness, their grandeur, their riches, their glory, and their pleasure.

"Was there ever a kingdom comparable to heaven," says St. Augustine, "where there is no victory but truth, no dignity but sanctity, no peace but boundless felicity, and no life but eternity. The inhabitants of this kingdom will subsist in God; there they will be united to Him, they will be filled with light while contemplating Him, they will be overwhelmed with ineffable joy in being united to Him, they will exist in His immortality, they will live in His immutability, they will love in His goodness, they will shine in His truth, they will rejoice in His charity, and they will live for all eternity."[2] Oh, how beautiful this kingdom will be when all its inhabitants are perfectly united to each other, and in the same union that will unite them to their King; when they will have no more battles to fight, no temptations to conquer, no passions to subdue; when they will rejoice in a perfect internal and external peace, without

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, 28.

[2] City of God, book ii., c. 29.

the least fear that it shall ever be interrupted or disturbed, because in that kingdom there will be no other will but that of God. O beautiful kingdom, where all will be kings with Jesus, and where all will participate in the light of His splendour and glory; and when the consummation of ages is over, the saints will unite their voices with the angels of this holy place, "and will praise the Lord God, the omnipotent who has entered on His reign."[1]

EJACULATION TO JESUS, KING OF CHRISTIANS.

O King of ages, immortal and invisible, I adore you. King of kings, and Lord of lords, before whom all earthly kings are as nothing. May all creatures pay you homage as their sovereign, may they respect the grandeur of your power, and love the wisdom of your ordinances, and obey and observe them faithfully. I know, my adorable Redeemer, that this earth and all it contains are yours; you reign everywhere in it by your supreme authority as God, and as the Son of God made man you have no need of armies to humble those who may oppose your designs, because you have only to wish and all becomes forthwith obedient to you. The destruction of so many empires before your incarnation was a preparation for your spiritual kingdom, and you came on earth to gain it back for your Father. Alas! how much pain and suffering and labour you endured to rescue it from the prince of this world and make yourself master of it.

I could never comprehend them; but I am astounded at the extent of your love, and the fathomless depth of my own ingratitude. O my divine Jesus! you alone should reign in my heart, because you became master of it at my baptism, but through a deplorable blindness, the world, the devil, sin, and my passions demolished your throne there, and destroyed the graces and blessings with which you so liberally enriched it. They have established their domination there, and I have obeyed them. I followed their faction, and by a horrible and unnatural debasement of my soul and body I did not desire you to reign over me. I abandoned you to serve tyrants who, soon after, domineered over me. I know my injustice and my ingratitude to you. Rescue me, dear Lord, from the power of those tyrants, and bring me into your own kingdom—the kingdom of justice, sanctity, peace, charity, humility, and glory. Reign over me, dear Jesus, crowned with thorns, disfigured with spittle, and overwhelmed with opprobrium and insult; because your crown and

[1] Apoc. xx. 6.

sceptre, although vile and contemptible to men, are to me more brilliant and grand than the richest of diadems. As you conquered your enemies and acquired your kingdom by your cross and your humiliations, engrave them on my soul and body as the marks of your empire over me. Complete, by your grace, the entire submission of my sinful thoughts and desires, which are daily warring against my soul, which so often revolt against your holy law, and which fill my heart with trouble and confusion. O Prince of Peace and established King over Sion, your throne is one of justice and equity; reign over my soul by the truth of your words, over my heart by the sweetness of your charity, and over my whole conduct and actions by the justice of your ordinances.

Lord Jesus, powerful and victorious King, do not allow sin to rule over my body, and grant that this unfortunate concupiscence, which makes so many efforts for ascendancy, may continue, through your grace and the unction of the Holy Ghost, in perfect subjection to your will. O my Jesus! you are my King, my Saviour, and my God, grant that your reign may be eternal in my heart; calm, I beseech you, all the troubles which the sight of my past sins and the fears of your judgments create within me, because there is no perfect peace here, but in heaven, where all combats and battles will be no more. Alas! dear Lord, when will this kingdom come which you commanded me to pray for every day? I await, dear Lord, and I desire it as the accomplishment of your designs over your elect, and as the end and consummation of your Church in the glory and in the bosom of your Father. May this kingdom soon come, whose king is truth, whose law is charity, whose duration is eternity, and whose peace is the immutability of God; where God will be all to all by the plenitude of His power, by the effusion of His love, by the torrents of His glory, by the communication of His goodness and His sanctity, and where there will be no more battles, but one eternal and unchanged peace. Amen.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON JESUS, CHIEF OF CHRISTIANS.

St. Paul, in almost every one of his Epistles, desires that we should regard the Church as one great body of which each Christian is a member, and Christ the head and the chief to whom all the members are united. Christ accomplished all the designs of His Father by coming on earth to form this great body. "God," says St. Paul to the Ephesians, "has subjected all things under His feet, and has made Him head over all the Church, which is His body, and the fulness of him who is filled all in all."[1] Jesus is called chief or head of the Church for many reasons—1st. Because the head occupies the first place in the human body, where the soul is said to animate the entire body; so, too, Jesus holds the first place in His mystic body, because the soul and spirit which animate it reside in Him, and because all the members of it receive life and sanctity from Him. 2nd. As the head is most closely connected to the body, so likewise Jesus is most intimately united to the Church, which can never be separated from Him. All bodies and associations which have not Jesus as their chief are not His, because He is not united to them, nor are they governed by His spirit. We will therefore consider four points in this chapter—1st. What unites the members of this body to Jesus, their chief. 2nd. What conclusions we are to draw from this union. 3rd. What is the extent of this body? 4th. What is its beauty?

What forms the intimate and ineffable union existing between Jesus and His members?

It is formed first by the Holy Ghost, whose plenitude Jesus received and which He communicates to His members according to the measure they require. This Spirit is the soul which animates this great body and makes it live. There is only one spirit in this body, because the spirit of the chief is in the whole body and in each particular member; and hence St. Paul says to the Ephesians: "As there is but one body there is but one spirit;"[2] and "We all, whether Jews or Gentiles, are baptised in the same spirit."[3] As the Holy Ghost is a spirit of union, and the substantial charity of the Father and the Son in the Trinity, who unites or links the divine persons to each other; so, too, the Holy Spirit poured out upon the members of the Church through Jesus, its chief, unites the faithful so intimately

[1] Ephes. i. 22, 23. [2] Ephes. iv. 4. [3] 1 Cor. xii. 13.

to Him, that they make only one man with Him; and hence all together have only one heart and one soul.

2nd. This grand union is formed by the sacraments, which are, as it were, so many veins and arteries conveying the blood, the spirit, and the life of Jesus into each of His members, and consequently places them in a condition to discharge their particular functions; and hence St. Paul says to the Ephesians: "From whom the whole body being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in charity."[1] If we reflect on the effects of the sacraments, we will see that they are instituted either to commence our union with Jesus or to perfect that already commenced. Baptism and penance rescue us from the body of Satan, and transfer us to that of Jesus in such a way that we become soul and body His members. The other sacraments augment and perfect this union, and this is particularly so in the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist, because there we partake of the body and blood of Jesus, and, consequently, of His soul and divinity, and where there is made, as it were, a divine blending of Jesus with us; so that we become, in the language of the holy fathers, the same body with Him, and with each of the faithful one sole bread, because we all receive the same bread; and what is still more wonderful, the mystic body nourishes itself with Jesus, its chief, just as He nourishes Himself with God. Behold now what the food of this grand body is. It is the same as that of its chief, nothing can satisfy its hunger, or fortify or make it believe, but this living bread which cometh down from heaven.

3rd. This union is formed by faith, hope, and charity, and the word of God, because we receive those virtues from Jesus in order to draw us to Him, that we may remain in Him, and He in us; and hence St. Paul says to the Ephesians that "we have access to Him by faith,"[2] and by this faith He dwells in our hearts. St. John says that "we dwell in God and He in us by charity."[3] One of the grand effects of love is to be united and transformed into the object of our love, and by hoping in Christ we depart from ourselves and are invested with His merits and with Himself; and hence when all the members believe the same things, love the same goods, and hope in the same promises, they are united with each other and with Jesus their chief; and then this grand body is formed in which Jesus desires to renew, and in which He desires to impress, all His mysteries and His virtues.

[1] Ephes. iv. 16. [2] Ephes. iii. 17. [3] 1 Ep. iv. 16.

What are the consequences of this union between Christ and His mystic body, and what effects follow from it?

Nothing can be more admirable and holy than the effects and consequences which naturally follow from this union, which we will soon see if we consider them with attention.

1st. The moment we are united to Jesus as members are to their chief, we become one man with Him; for the life of the members ought to be the same as their chief.

2nd. As all the members make only one person with Christ, it follows that whatever is said of the chief can be said of the members; and hence we are priests, victims, and kings with Him, and make with Him one Son of God.

3rd. All the members participate in all the goods and advantages which their chief possesses, in His merits, His sufferings, His humiliations, and His glory, and hence He says: "I gave them all that my Father gave me;" and, therefore, He gave a part of His divinity and His humanity.

4th. It follows from this great principle that whatever good or evil we do to His members we do to Himself, and hence St. Matthew says: "Amen I say to you, as long as you do it to one of these my least brethren, you do it to Me,"[1] and "As long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to Me;"[2] and this is the reason why we say that Jesus suffers in His martyrs, and that when His members are sick He is sick, and when they are humbled, badly treated, or despised, He suffers with them; when they are persecuted He is persecuted, and He cries down from heaven, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" You cause my body to suffer when you afflict that which is united to mine, and which I love, in a certain sense, more than my own body, because I offered up my own to all kinds of sufferings for the love of, and to save my mystic body.

5th. We can also say that as Jesus is so intimately united to all His members, it is He that operates in them and with them all the good they do, and that when they pray, weep, and act, He prays, weeps, and acts with them, and thus enables them to merit and obtain glory.

6th. All Christians who live by the spirit of Jesus, their chief, are members of each other, because the unity of the spirit, which regulates their body, is the cause of making common to all the members the supernatural and other spiritual goods conferred on this body; and although all the members may not have the same functions, they act throughout the common body for its benefit, and they par-

[1] Matt. xxv. 40. [2] Matt. xxv. 45.

ticipate in all that happens to it; and hence, according to the admirable comparison of St. Paul, "what one suffers all suffer, and if one be in joy all the other members will be in joy also." The eye sees not only for itself but for all the body, the hands act, the feet move, the tongue speaks, the ears hear, and all the other faculties discharge their functions for themselves and for the entire body. If we be free from envy, we must love the good we see in each member, and consequently we will have a part in it; and hence, says St. Augustine, if you love it belongs to you; because we do not regard any member of the body of Jesus as useless, nor his functions as unnecessary, no matter how despicable he may appear; because, says St. Paul to the Corinthians, "No member can say to another I have no necessity for your help,"[1] since all the members and their functions also are necessary to the body, and for the utility and good of it in general, and for each member in particular.

7th. It follows from this admirable union that, as all the members of the mystic body of Jesus are part of the Holy Ghost, and of the charity which unites them, there must be a holy intercourse of prayer, merits, and good works between them; because the charity which does not seek its own interests causes all who are united to the body to profit of all the good performed by the just. It follows also that there is a communion of spiritual goods between the saints in heaven, those on earth, and those detained in purgatory; that the saints join their prayers to ours to God, that we honour them by our praises and respect, that we pray for those in purgatory, and that God often hears our petitions, alleviates their pains, or entirely liberates them.

8th. The union which exists between the members of the body of Jesus is so grand, that there is between them not only a communion of the merits of Jesus, from whom as chief comes all the good and all the merit visible in the body, but they also participate in the merits of the just who lived from the beginning of the world; and so much so that every living member of the spirit of God has part in all the good done now and that has been done in the Church; and the prophet David foretold all this when he said: "I participate in all the goods of all who fear the Lord and observe His commandments;" and St. Ambrose says the Church prays, weeps, suffers, labours, and does penance in common. What a consolation for a Christian to know that he has a part in all that the body of Jesus does—in the prayers of the saints, the tears of penitents, the sufferings of martyrs,

[1] 1 Ep. xii. 21.

the labours and austerities of solitaries, and, in a word, in the merits of all the saints, which, however, do not so much belong to them as to Jesus. It was in favour of this communion of members that the Church, on the recommendation of martyrs, relaxed the severity of her rules towards sinners who could not perform great penances on account of their weakness and debility.

9th. It follows also from this union that all the members of this body participate in the merits of the other members, in proportion only to the faith, the charity, and the union they have with Jesus, just as men are recompensed in a profitable enterprise—he who deposits most money receives the largest interest. Jesus, the chief, the bond, and the master of this spiritual society, distributes the goods and profits of it according to each one's merit; but these merits and profits are the gifts of Christ, which have their worth and value from his death and other mysteries. All consists, in this society, in being united to its chief, and hence St. John says: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine tree, so neither can you unless you abide in me."[1] All our good consists in being united to Jesus by a firm faith and a constant charity, and to live in such a manner that nothing can separate us from Him.

Who are they who strive to tear away members from the body of Christ, and who frequently succeed in their efforts?

They consist chiefly of four kinds:—1st. Tyrants, and all those who persecute the Church, and who, by the threats and promises which they display to the faithful, have seduced many to fall who had given proofs of the faith in them. These persecutors have been as the dragon mentioned in the Apocalypse, "whose tail drew away one third of the stars of heaven."[2] 2nd. Heretics have drawn away many members from Jesus by their false doctrines, and hence St. Paul says that "being seduced themselves, they seduce souls and separate them from the Church, and lead them into their errors." 3rd. Scandal-givers seduce by their bad example many members from Jesus, because they teach them to do evil by doing it themselves. The towns and cities of Christendom, which should be the light of the world, are filled with scandal-givers; and, oh, what countless evil those people cause, and how difficult to repair their wickedness; and hence St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish for whom Christ has died."[3] All those are scandal-givers who compose or circulate books or pamphlets contrary to faith or morals; all who speak profane words or blasphemies, or act

[1] John, xv. 4. [2] Apoc. xii. 4. [3] 1 Cor. viii. 11.

criminally in the presence of others, particularly if they be young and innocent; all who dress immodestly; all those who hold high positions and rule in kingdoms and provinces, and who lead lives worse than pagans; all who could check the progress of vice and yet do not do it, all those rob Jesus of His members. 4th. All those are scandal-givers who follow the detestable vice of impurity, and who by their criminal solicitations and pernicious advances poison the members of Jesus, and turn them over to Satan as members of prostitution. This is how we dishonour Jesus, and become slaves to our vices and passions.

What is the extent and the grandeur of the mystic body of Christ? This grand body had members in all times on the earth, in purgatory, and in heaven since Ascension Day. All the saints of the Old Law, the penitent Adam, the innocent Abel, Seth, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all the Jews and Gentiles who believed in the Divine Liberator with a living and active faith, and all the good Christians inhabiting the different kingdoms and nations of this world, all those are members of this body no matter what distance separates them; no matter what condition, age, or sex they may be, all have the same faith, the same hope, the same sacraments, and are animated by the same spirit; and hence St. Paul says to the Galatians: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ."[1] This body extends not only over the earth, but over the heavens and purgatory as well; because all the blessed in glory, and all the deceased faithful in purgatory, are members of this holy body, because the same spirit animates the just on earth, the saints in heaven, and faithful detained for a time in purgatory; and because it is the same charity that unites Jesus and the saints and us, who fight, and labour, and weep, and await to be glorified after our victory.

Who are those who are not of the body of Jesus?

The number of those who have that misfortune is incalculable. Pagans, Jews, heretics, schismatics, and all who are legitimately excommunicated by ecclesiastical authority—all are excluded from the body of Jesus; and they are excluded because they belong to the body of Satan, and because "their prince and chief is that spirit of malice who exercises his power over the incredulous and the children of unbelief."[2] Although those persons do not belong to the body of the Church, still they are useful to it, because they serve for the exercise of her charity, to manifest her stability, and make her

[1] Gal. iii. 28. [2] Ephes. ii. 2.

sanctity shine with visible splendour. Pagans are useful as a material for her labour in the work of their conversion; heretics afford her an opportunity to prove her doctrines; schismatics enable her to manifest her solidity, compactness, and union; the Jews serve to make her truth and beauty known through the prophecies which they believe, and which prove her existence and her perseverance; and the excommunicated prove the wholesomeness of her discipline and the purity of her morals.

This body of Christ is never weary in her efforts to bring the pagan, the Jew, and the heretic into her fold. She weeps and sighs at the separation of so many people from her, she is always ready to receive them into her bosom, and she is as full of joy and happiness at their return as she was of pain and grief at their departure.

Although this body of Christ is universal, and contains a countless number of members, still all are not living members of it. All Catholics, it is true, belong to this visible body of Christ, because they are ruled by their bishops and pastors, because they worship at the same altar and participate in the prayers and sacraments of the Church; and yet all are not living members because one mortal sin could cause the death of a member, and a dead member has not that living faith that worketh by charity, which unites us to Jesus, and which is the spirit that animates all the members of Jesus. All those who have not charity, and who are not animated with the spirit of the Chief, are dead members. They are, it is true, in the body of Christ, but they are there like a paralytic in society; they cling to the body and have neither motion nor life, they are in the Church like straw tossed about by every wind that blows, they are as tares amongst good corn, and as goats amongst sheep. The living members tolerate those dead members, they pray for them, compassionate them, and do all they can to deliver them from their miserable condition. At present the living and the dead members are so confounded that very often we cannot distinguish them, for "God alone knows who are His;" but on the last day all will be manifest, and mankind will be divided into two great bodies. The devil will appear that day encompassed with a countless crowd of reprobates. He will be at the head of all who died in mortal sin, even though millions of them once belonged to the visible body of Jesus. And Jesus will be at the head of the just, His mystic body; and when those two bodies are complete all things will be accomplished, time will be no more, and each will go to receive his due. The body of reprobates, with the devil at their head, will be precipitated into the infernal abyss, and

all the members of Christ's body, united to their Chief, will ascend with Him into heaven to glorify God eternally there. This great day will be the day of general resurrection, and of the perfect and entire association of all who belonged to Jesus, and the accomplishment and consummation of God's designs upon His elect.

In what does the beauty of the mystic body of Jesus consist? 1st. In the just proportion which the members composing it will have, and in the order in which they are placed in it by God, just as the beauty of natural bodies consists in the proportion which each has received. God, says St. Paul, put many members in the body, and He placed each where He pleased, for if all the members of the natural body were confounded and mixed up together, it would be a monster; so, too, it would be in the mystic body if the members composing it were fixed in the same place. But God placed them in such positions that none can say he is not in the right place, in order that there should not be division or disunion, and that each would occupy his place without envy and in holy peace. One of the chief causes of disorder and deformity in the visible and mystic body of Jesus is, that those who should be at the feet, and last in the Church, wish to be at the head; and those who should be cut off from the Church, or, at least, should be in some remote corner weeping over their past crimes, desire to occupy positions which are not their due. This is what troubles and puts all in disorder, for as order constitutes all the beauty of this body, so confusion makes all its deformity. We cannot expect to see this beautiful order in its perfection here on earth, because the cupidity of sinful man prevents things from being what they ought to be.

2nd. The diversity of each member's functions still further develops the beauty of the mystic body of Jesus; for as the hands, in the natural body, have different functions from those of the feet, and as those of the eyes are different from those of the ears, and so on for the rest, so, too, the members of the mystic body have their different functions. The duties of bishops and pastors are not the same as those of the simple faithful; bishops and pastors are, in a certain sense, the eyes and tongue of the mystic body, and amongst the faithful there are many who act and labour for the common food of the body, and there are others who are as the feet, that carry and sustain the body; and, what is most admirable, the same Spirit operates all these things, because He distributes His gifts to each as best suits him, and He acts differently according to the wants of each particular member touching the duties he is obliged to perform.

3rd. The beauty of the mystic body is also derived from Jesus, the chief who governs it, from the Holy Spirit that animates it, and from the communion of goods and evils there is between the members and the Chief; and although the body is beautiful, it will not have all its integrity and perfection till the end of time. There are many members yet to be formed in the succession of ages, and the last elect that shall die will be the last member to complete the perfection and beauty of this grand body; and this can only happen at the destruction of this world, when this masterpiece of God's mercy and omnipotence will be for ever perfected. All nature groans and suffers now, like the agonies of childbirth, until this perfect man be formed, and till he shall, in a certain sense, be born from the womb of an expiring universe, not to live on this earth, but in God's celestial empire. God will preserve this world in its present state till this grand work will be accomplished; and hence He will command His angels not to strike the earth nor the sea until all the elect are marked with the sign of the cross, which is the sign of the living God and the seal of all who are for the kingdom of heaven.

What obligations do we owe to Jesus, our Chief? 1st. We are bound to a continual dependence on this divine Chief, to follow the motions and impressions of His holy spirit in all our conduct, and never to wish or do anything contrary to His holy will. 2nd. It is often necessary to make acts of internal devotion, in order to secure our union and to accustom ourselves to pray, to act, and to suffer in union with the prayers, actions, and sufferings of Jesus. 3rd. As union amongst the members is one of the things Jesus loves most, we ought to do all we can, and suffer all we are able, to preserve it against the terrible evil of schism; and as God, who is essentially one, wishes us to preserve this unity, we should never cease to maintain it; and hence Christ demanded from His Father before His death that the elect should be one with Him and with each other, as He is one with His Father. 4th. We should pray to Jesus to finish soon the formation of all His body, and not to permit anything to retard a work so grand, in which He who accomplished all in all will find the entire fulfilment of all His designs.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, CHIEF OF CHRISTIANS.

I adore you, Jesus my Saviour, only Son of the Father, God and man, Word made flesh, established Chief of the Church on earth, in heaven, and in purgatory. Although that Church is composed of

many members, still it is only one, and you are its head, the Holy Ghost its soul, and your graces and merits, the blood which courses through this body by the efficacy of the sacraments, like so many channels, to make it live after the example of your life. Am I united to you, dear Lord, as the members are to the head? Is my life conformable to yours? Is it your spirit that animates me? Ah, my God, I fear I am a dead member, or perhaps entirely cut off from your body. I am in the body of the Church through your great mercy, but I know that all in it are not your living members. We all have the same faith, the same mysteries, the same sacraments, the same pastors, and the same promises of eternal happiness; but, alas, we are not united to you with the same charity.

How happy are those who are united to you by charity; what advantages do they not find in that union where the last members are as the first, where the vile and despised of this world are as the most honourable, and where each is placed in proportion to his wants and in the very position that suits him. Although their duties are different, their spirit and life are the same, because the foot does not live a different life from the hand, nor are the internal parts of this body animated by a different spirit from the external parts; because as there is only one body, so there is only one spirit in all. The diversity of members composing this body, and the different functions they perform, make us see its beauty and its sanctity; and you, my dear Jesus, fix them where you wish, in order that each may discharge his duties according to your will.

Ah, my Saviour, how happy we shall be and how much we shall rejoice if we are content with the place you assign to us, and if we discharge the several duties of our state, and never envy those who may have more of your favour than we may have. Place me, dear Lord, where you wish, because all I desire is to be a member of your body, animated by your spirit and living according to your life. What a comfort it is to me to know that when I am united to you by charity, I am united at the same time to all the members of your body, no matter how distant we are from each other; and that, consequently, I have a part in all their labours, their prayers, and good works. Dear Lord, you know that the multitude of my occupations do not permit me to pray as I desire, but your members do so for me every hour of the day and of the night. They pray and I pray with them, because if I love you, I am united to them. I cannot perform great penances, because the weakness of my body could not bear them; but I am comforted when I remember that I partake of those

performed by so many illustrious penitents, and that I have a part in the merits of their mortifications, their fasts, their vigils, their prayers, and other penitential exercises. Grant that I may love with a good heart all the good your penitents do, and that I may unite myself to them and to their works.

It is from you, O divine Chief, that all those deeds derive their merits, and it is by virtue of your blood, circulating through this body, that they acquire their beauty and their sanctity. Although I am one in faith with this body, am I a living member of it, do I live the life of its chief, and am I animated by its spirit? I tremble when I remember that there is no medium between being a member of the body of Jesus and that of the devil. Since mankind is divided into two great bodies, and each body has a chief, you, dear Jesus, are Chief over the just, and the devil is chief over sinners, and he who is not with you is against you, and therefore the devil is his chief, and he is incorporated with him, has submitted to his dominion, and acts under his influence. The world and all worldlings are all this in the eyes of faith, and the wicked call all this grand and agreeable, but they are an abomination before God.

O my amiable Saviour and God of all sanctity, you are Chief of all the just, they make only one with you, your spirit animates them, you govern them, you make them live according to your life, you give them all blessings, they live with you and for you, they hope for the same inheritance you possess; and these are they who constitute the beauty and the sanctity of the body of the elect and of all the just whom this world despises. Finish, dear Lord, finish the formation of this grand body, the chief work of your grace and the fulfilment of your designs. All nature desires and awaits the happy moment when this body will receive its entire perfection and will be consummated in glory. Rescue, dear and merciful Redeemer, all those members from the devil whom he has already enslaved and incorporated with himself. Do not permit them to remain under the power of the prince of darkness; re-unite them, by the power of your grace, to your body, in order that there may be no more distinction between Jew and Gentile, slave and freedman, but that we may be all one with you both here and hereafter. Amen.

CHAPTER XV.

ON JESUS, PASTOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE FAITHFUL, AND MODEL OF PASTORS OF SOULS.

THE great design Jesus had in becoming man was to draw mankind to Himself, and to make them love Him, and He took this form in order to make us understand the extent of His love for us, and hence oblige us to love Him, and thus sanctify all the motions of our hearts; and amongst all the qualities calculated to induce us to love Him that of Pastor seems the most suitable to produce that effect in us, as we will see in this chapter; and, therefore, we will consider Jesus under the image of the Good Pastor. God, through His prophets, promised Him as such to mankind: "I will set up one shepherd over them, and He will feed them, and shall be their shepherd."[1]

Before Christ, mankind was a wandering sheep exposed to the rage and fury of the wolf and the lion; but the God of all consolation and mercy, touched with our sad condition, sent His divine Son to be our pastor. What did this Son of God do, this great God so full of majesty and glory? He invested Himself in the appearance of sin, in our human nature, and with the voice and tender cry of the sheep: "Being made to the likeness of man, and in habit found as a man."[2] His love for us made Him take this likeness, lest we should be dazzled and alarmed at the splendour of His divinity. He concealed His majesty and His glory under the appearance of a sheep, and the pastor Himself has become the sheep and the lamb together, as the prophet Ezechiel foretold of Him. How worthy of our love is this pastor, and how great our ingratitude if we do not recognise and love Him in this state; and hence we will consider five points in this chapter, which will give us some knowledge of Christ as our pastor. 1st. We will consider the great love this divine pastor has for His sheep, and the nature and qualities of this love. 2nd. The admirable effects of this love. 3rd. The qualities of Jesus our pastor. 4th. What the sheep should be to their pastor. 5th. The sad and pitiable state of a soul which is not conducted by this pastor.

What is the nature and what are the qualities of this love which Jesus has for His sheep? 1st. It is incomprehensible; because to comprehend it we must know that it is the same extent of love as the Father has for Jesus, and He tells us so when He says that "He loves us as the Father loves Him." The Father's love for

[1] Ezech. xxxiv. 23. [2] Philip. ii. 7.

His Son is infinite, immense, and eternal, and even as much as He loves Himself; and such is the love Jesus has for us. Could anything grander than this be conceived, and where is the Christian who will not be transported with joy, gratitude, and admiration on account of this ineffable love Jesus has for us.

2nd. His love for us is eternal—He has chosen His sheep from eternity. This love has had no beginning—it is as old as Himself; and as He had no beginning and will have no end, He will always love His sheep, and will love them through eternity, and no one can deprive Him of them; because His Father, who has given them to Him, is stronger and more powerful than the world and the devil.

3rd. The love of this divine pastor has anticipated our love, because St. John says: "It was He who first loved us;" because He gave us a soul and a being capable of loving Him; because at our birth, according to the flesh, He infused His charity into our hearts, and instantly made us His children; and in whatsoever way we consider the love of God for us, we find it always anticipating our love, because our love for Him is an effect of His love, since we cannot love Him till He gives us the love to do so. How enormous, therefore, must our ingratitude be if we do not love this good shepherd, Jesus Christ, and how much more must be the ingratitude of those whom He loved when they were His enemies.

4th. This love of Jesus for us is gratuitous, because all of us were His enemies when we began to love Him, and because He found none amongst His subjects but those worthy of His hatred and His anger. Alas! what a deplorable state we were in when Jesus came to save us, for we were buried in crime and error, and deserved eternal punishment and to be exiled for ever from His presence. The love of Jesus for us was still more gratuitous, because He had no need for our services, our adorations, our homages, or of our praises, as holy David expresses it,[1] and because He was sufficient for Himself and found all the happiness He could desire in the grandeur and sanctity of His own being, which nothing could augment or diminish.

5th. The love of this charitable pastor is most liberal, because He distributes His gifts and blessings in profusion to His sheep. He has, in a certain sense, exhausted Himself, because He could not give us anything greater or so proportioned to our longings as Himself, with all He is and all He has—His graces, His word, His spirit, His blood, and His life. His love for us is magnificent, because He gives us graces which exalt us up into a participation of

[1] Psalms, xv. 1.

His divine nature; and those gifts of His love lift us up from the servitude of sin, and sanctify us by a participation in His merits and an association in His grandeur.

6th. The love of Jesus for His sheep was a love of suffering, and no better imitation of this love could be than when we voluntarily suffer much for the object we love, particularly when those for whom we suffer are our enemies. This was the way Jesus testified His love for us; and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "When as yet we were sinners Christ died for us, according to the time."[1] This divine pastor sacrificed His goods, His honour, and His life for His sheep. He sacrificed His goods by becoming poor to enrich us; He had not whereon to lay His head, in order that His sheep would find their peace in the bosom of a God impoverished for love of them. He sacrificed His honour, because He willingly passed as an imposture in the eyes of the world, as one possessed by a demon, as a blasphemer, and He even died as a criminal between two thieves. He sacrificed His life by exposing Himself to the rigours of all seasons, to the reverses of all times, and by delivering His body to torments the most painful; and, like Jacob, who was a figure of Him, He endured the adversities of this life, the heats of summer, the biting winds of winter, and hunger, thirst, and many sleepless nights, for love of us. He became man for us, it is true; but this was not enough for His great love. He could live a life of peace and comfort, and He preferred one of pain and suffering. He delivered Himself up to all kinds of outrage and bad treatment; and yet all this was not sufficient. He must die and shed all His blood, in order that every drop of this blood, and every one of His wounds, should be so many mementoes of His boundless love for us. Oh, let us not be deaf to those hallowed reminiscences, let us love Him who loved us so much, and let us never dread to do and suffer much to show Him that we truly love Him.

7th. The love of our divine pastor is a tender love; He speaks to His sheep in the language of mercy and compassion, His words are full of sweetness, He accommodates Himself to their frailties, and His affectionate familiarity almost lessens His dignity. He is a child amongst His children, and sometimes almost forgets His rank as their pastor, because He speaks and acts amongst His sheep as only one of themselves. Behold the wonderful goodness, love, and affection of this adorable shepherd! His sheep feel Him in their inmost soul, and they are faithful in following Him and hearing His voice.

[1] Rom. v. 8.

What are the effects of Christ's love for His sheep?

They are many and admirable. 1st. He seeks His sheep when they stray away from Him. 2nd. He calls and conducts them back. 3rd. He carries them when they are unable to walk. 4th. He watches over them with ceaseless vigilance. 5th. He feeds them with tender care. 6th. He has done and still does all things for them.

How does He seek His sheep when they wander away from Him?

In order to answer this question we should first know how they stray away from Him, because nothing is easier than to stray away and lose ourselves on account of our unfortunate inclination to follow the irregular desires of our hearts.

1st. A sheep strays away when it will not follow the shepherd, when it stops to pluck up some noxious herb off its pathway, when it permits the flock to advance, and will not follow it; and having once made a step from the pathway it strays away more and more, and soon runs after the pleasures and vanities of the age, and at last falls amongst savage beasts and is lost.

2nd. The sheep of Christ stray away when, as a punishment for their crimes, God allows them to fall into the hands of blind guides, who lead them into dangerous thoroughfares and cause them to fall with themselves into the precipice; and Christ Himself says: "If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch."[1] 3rd. The sheep wander away when they have not a sincere desire to know the truth, and when they seek for persons who will flatter them and who will not condemn the desires of their hearts through fear of disturbing their criminal repose. Those unfortunate sheep wish that those who conduct them would throw a veil over their faults, in order to reduce them to half their magnitude; but the prophet Isaias discovers the secret thoughts of those souls who wish to be thus seduced, and he puts in their mouths the desires of their corrupt hearts in clearer language than they would dare to speak them: "Who say to the seers, see not, and to them that behold, behold not for us the things that are right; speak to us of pleasant things, see errors for us, take away the way from me, turn away the path from us, and let the holy one of Israel cease from before us."[2] This is what a countless number of persons think, or express by their conduct, although they do not say so as clearly as the text has it.

Who, therefore, would cause a poor sheep to become a wanderer,

[1] Matt. xv. 14. [2] Isaias, xxx. 10, 11.

since it cannot by itself return to its legitimate pastor, because being accustomed to a long course of inveterate habits, it drifts about on the thoroughfare of vice, and, almost blind from its criminal pursuits, it cannot find out the sheepfold; and besides it is not able to walk, and hence must always remain a wanderer. But Jesus, always full of mercy, seeks after it and attracts it by the sweetness of His voice; He runs after it, and neither the contempt which it made of His love, nor the resistance it opposed to His grace, is able to prevent Him; and as He promised to forget all its ingratitude, He seeks to load it with His blessings and to make it return to Him on account of the cross and all the sufferings He endured for it. The prophet Osee beautifully illustrates all this when he says: "The daughter of Sion said, I will go after my lovers." She abandons me, said the Lord, but I will make her retrace her footsteps. "I will hedge up thy way with thorns, I will stop it up with a wall; and she will not find her path, and she shall follow her lovers and shall not overtake them, and she shall seek them and shall not find them, and she shall say, I will go and return to my first husband, because it was better with me then than now."[1]

So, too, the merciful Jesus seeks after the wandering sheep. He sheets up the way of His criminal sheep with thorns by sending crosses and afflictions to obstruct his sinful journey; He scourges the soul with remorse and deprives it of the creatures it loves, and it is obliged to return to its first pastor, Jesus. O happy and delightful thorn, which so pierced the soul as to cure it, to remind it of its foolish wanderings, and to unite it to its God! Jesus came on earth to seek and to save those who had strayed away from Him; and when He had finished His course and returned to His Father, He did not abandon His sheep, because He left pastors to administer His charity, and gave them a portion of His zeal to enable them to go through the world and gather up the sheep which are to form His flock. The apostles did this after they received the Holy Ghost; they went about from city to city and from kingdom to kingdom, and exposed themselves to the fury of tyrants to rescue the straying sheep from the jaws of the infernal beast, and place them under the care of Jesus, their veritable pastor.

4th. After this divine pastor sought and found His sheep, He did not leave them in the sad condition He found them, because He carries those that are feeble and unable to walk on His shoulders and in His bosom; and when the prophet Isaias predicted what God

[1] Osee, ii. 5, 6, 7.

was to do in favour of His captive people, he drew a figure of what Jesus was to do in favour of His sheep, saying: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather together the lambs with His arms, and shall take them up in His bosom, and He will carry those that are in young."[1] Jesus, our charitable pastor, carries in His tender mercy those feeble souls who are in their Christian infancy, and as yet young lambs; and He carries with the same affection those that are in young, or who have conceived Christ in their hearts, and have Him already formed within them, but who are not sufficiently strong to walk at a quick pace, and run in the ways of justice. Behold, you hard-hearted sheep, the charity and patience of this divine pastor who carries His sheep in His soul, His memory, His heart, and on His shoulders. He carries them in His soul, because He knows them, and distinguishes those that belong to Him from those which never can enter the eternal sheepfold; and hence St. Paul says: "The Lord knows those who belong to Him." We do not know them, because the sheep and the goats of this world are mixed up together; but at the end of time Jesus will make the separation. He carries them in His heart as in an asylum or place of repose, where he animates them and closely unites them to Himself. He carries them in His hands to offer them continually to His Father as a gift, an offering and sacrifice, which He makes of His entire flock, and they are so secure and firm there that no one can forcibly take them from Him. He will give them eternal life, and hence they can never perish, because His Father, who gave them to Him, is greater and more powerful than all the enemies who would dare to seize on them. He carried them on His shoulders during His passion, because when loaded with the cross and charged with all their iniquities, He was repairing their fall, rescuing them from the powers of darkness, and gaining a heaven for them.

5th. The third effect of the love of Jesus, our pastor, is to guide His sheep and heal all that are ailing. He has two shepherd's crooks to bring back His sheep, one of which the prophet Zachary calls beauty or sweetness, and the girdle. The first of these represents the beauty of Jesus, His sanctity, the grandeur of His divinity, the mildness of His reign, the pleasures and consolations we find in the practice of virtue, and in following this divine pastor. The second represents the charity with which Jesus attracts His sheep, unites and attaches them to Him, and enables them to walk after Him. This is how Jesus brings back His sheep, and conducts them

[1] Isaias, xl. 11.

into the Church; He draws them away from the world, and from all the places through which they are dispersed; and when He has massed them together He heals their wounds, restores their former vigour, fills them with His favours, and keeps them always on the path of justice; and hence the prophet Ezechiel says: "I will seek that which was lost, and that which was driven away I will bring back; I will build up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was weak; and that which was fat and strong I will preserve and feed them in judgment."[1] All our happiness consists in leaving ourselves entirely under the guidance of Jesus, and in delivering ourselves up to His holy spirit; and hence we should never doubt in His skill to lead us, no matter how rough the way may appear to us, because His beauty and charity will make it smooth, and easy, and agreeable for us, and because the soul to which He discovers His beauty and grandeur, and in which His charity abides, will run with pleasure after Him, and allow Him to conduct it without the least resistance.

6th. The fourth effect of the love of Jesus for His sheep is to watch over them; and hence holy David says: "He who watches Israel never sleepeth,"[2] and, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and His ears open to their prayers."[3] None of His sheep escapes His vigilance, neither the poor, nor the rich, nor the solitary, nor those living in the world, because all are present to His eyes, and He watches over them to keep them far away from all the dangers of salvation, to repel the approaches of the infernal wolf, to defend them against their enemies, to supply them with all the means to practise virtue, and to make them advance in perfection. He never forgets them, even when they are not thinking of Him, and hence holy David says: "I will be mindful of Rahab and Babylon knowing me."[4] I will be mindful of Rahab, although once a woman full of impurities, and of Babylon, once buried in the darkness of error and falsehood, enslaved with the love of this world, the scandal of God's people, and living according to her desires. "I will never forget you; behold, I have you graven in my hands, and thy walls, O Jerusalem, are always before my eyes;"[5] and hence no one can say that Jesus forgets His sheep, or thinks no longer of them, when He does not forget His greatest enemies.

7th. The foregoing favours are not the only blessings given to His sheep by this divine pastor, because the nourishment He gives

[1] Ezech. xxxiv. 16 [2] Psalms, cxx. 4. [3] Psalms, xxxiii. 16.
[4] Psalms, lxxxvi. 4. [5] Isaias, xlix. 17.

them makes a fifth effect of His love; and how holy and wholesome this nourishment is the prophet Ezechiel tells us when He says: "I will feed my sheep in the mountains of Israel, by the rivers and in the habitations of the land; I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures, and their pastures shall be in the high mountains of Israel, there shall they rest on the green grass, and be fed on fat pastures upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord."[1] "And I will make a covenant of peace with them, and will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land, and they that dwell in the wilderness shall sleep secure in the forests."[2] "And I will raise up for them a bud of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with famine in the land, neither shall they bear any more the reproach of the Gentiles."[3] Whatever God promised to do for the Jewish people in the above texts, He has done and will continue to do for the sheep of His sheepfold; because He feeds them on the mountain where they are elevated above the things of this world, and fed with the sublime truths of religion; He pastures them on the river banks where they can drink of the living waters of His grace and love, which spring up in eternal life, and which completely extinguishes their thirst. The fertile pastures signify the abundant graces and truths found in the Church and in the Sacred Scriptures. He feeds them on the mountains and in quiet places when He calls them into solitude, and there speaks to their hearts, where He fills them with divine consolations, and makes them taste how sweet and agreeable the Lord is. He makes them lie down on the green grass, where they repose on His bosom and are undisturbed in His love, and where they find peace and happiness amidst the sufferings to which they are exposed. He makes an alliance of peace with them when He recalls them from their wanderings, reconciles them to God, and makes them taste true peace as the fruit of their labours; He banishes wild beasts from the land when He gives them strength to destroy their vices, to combat their passions, and so conquer the devil that they can rest secure in the forest of this world; and He raises a plant of great worth for them when He gives them Himself in the adorable Eucharist. He is the plant of good name, because He is the "true vine, the young shoot of Jesse, the flower of the field and the lily of the valley;" His sheep find abundant food in Him for their souls and bodies, because He enlightens and fortifies them in their place of exile here on earth, and will continue to do so for ever in heaven; and hence St. John says in his Apocalypse:

[1] Ezech. xxxiv. 13, 14, 15. [2] Ezech. xxxiv. 25. [3] Ezech. xxxiv. 29.

"They shall no more hunger or thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the water of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,"[1] and where they shall be fully satiated with the glory of God, and inebriated with the delights of His infinite consolations.

8th. The sixth effect of the love of Jesus for His sheep is, that He has done and continues to do everything for them, because the Sacred Scriptures tell us that God made all things for His elect, that the world exists for them, that Jesus worked all His mysteries for their benefit, and that for them He made the heavenly bodies revolve over their heads, day and night to succeed each other, and the seasons to change with such agreeable variety. All the great movements and revolutions of this world, all the wars in which so many peoples and nations are destroyed, frequently occur in the designs of God to bring some of His sheep into His sheepfold; and Jesus speaks for them in the Sacred Scriptures, and they hear His voice. The holy sacraments were instituted for them, and graces given, and all the spiritual goods, instructions, and blessings found in the Church are bestowed on them. This divine pastor promises eternal blessings to His sheep, and fills them with all kinds of spiritual benedictions; and hence the prophet Ezechiel says: "I will make them a blessing all around my hill, and I will send down the rain in its season, and there shall be showers of blessings."[2] The hill, mentioned in the text is the Church; the rains are the countless graces which Jesus pours down on His flock. The earth shall germinate and shall be fruitful, and their souls, like a field which God had cultivated, shall produce fruits of all kinds of virtue and good works; and hence the prophet Ezechiel says again that the Lord, speaking of His sheep, says "that they shall be in their land without fear, and they shall know that I am the Lord when I shall have broken the bonds of their yoke, and shall have delivered them out of the hand of those that rule over them."[3] Oh, what confidence and gratitude should not those divine and comforting words excite in us; and therefore we should sing with the prophet David: "The Lord is my shepherd, and I will want for nothing, for He will place me in a fertile pasturage." Therefore, let us live in a constant recollection of those mercies, and as God made all things for us, let us make all serve to bring us to Him, and let us make use of all for the sanctification of our souls and the glory of God, to whom all must be attributed as the principle and end of all things.

[1] Apoc. vii. 16, 17. [2] Ezech. xxxiv. 26. [3] Ezech. xxxiv. 27.

What are the qualities of Jesus as pastor and director of souls? Jesus possesses in Himself all the qualifications necessary for a pastor to guide and direct souls, and He possesses in their highest and fullest perfection all those qualifications which those should possess who are called to guide souls, if they desire to discharge worthily the holy and awful ministration of pastor, because they ought to make but one pastor with Christ, and, as St. Augustine says, "Though the Church has many pastors, still they are only one in Christ." As ministers of Jesus they guide His flock in a visible manner, and they do so by His authority, His spirit, and by a participation in His priesthood; and through them He directs, guides, sanctifies, and saves this flock; and hence we see that He possesses all the qualities for a true pastor. 1st. He had the vocation and sanctity necessary for that state. 2nd. He is disinterested and enlightened. 3rd. He is prudent and wise. And 4th. He is zealous. Let us examine with care all these qualifications, and let us pray to God to give pastors to His Church who possess them.

1st. Jesus had the sanctity of life necessary for good pastor, because as no man was ever able to convict Him of the least fault, His life must have been free from every appearance of sin, and because He was always employed in the exercise of the most eminent virtues; and although He was consecrated priest and pastor of souls at His Incarnation, He did not attempt its functions till He had spent thirty years in retreat, in labour, and in the exercise of penance; and so far was He from taking upon Himself the office of pastor, that He accepted it only when called by His Father and anointed with the fulness of the Holy Ghost. It was only after this vocation that He began to discharge the duties of His ministry, and He continued, during the remainder of His life, to discharge them with an admirable zeal and application, never ceasing to search after His lost sheep and to provide for their wants; and what should be a great consolation to us is that He still guides His flock from heaven, whither He has gone after suffering death and rising glorious and immortal from his grave. He has acquired through these mysteries a sovereign power in heaven and on earth; and by this means He became in a most special manner the grand high priest of the fold and the model of all other priests; and hence St. Paul says: "The God of peace who brought from the dead, the great pastor of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the blood of the everlasting testament."[1] It is likewise necessary that all who undertake the salvation of souls should be called by God as Jesus was, that they should never enter into this holy

[1] Heb. xiii. 20.

ministry of themselves, and that their lives should be irreproachable and free from crime; and hence the ancient canons ordained that none but those who preserved their baptismal innocence should be appointed for the guidance of souls, and, therefore, the life of a pastor should be all holy and divine like that of Jesus.

The second qualification of our pastor Jesus is knowledge; He has all the light necessary to conduct souls; He knows and can penetrate the hearts and consciences of men; no thoughts, however hidden, can be concealed from Him; He discovers all things by His own knowledge; He knows all the surroundings of self-love, the depth of corruption in the human heart, and the extent and enormity of mortal sin; and, at the same time, He sees all the remedies to cure and destroy it.

Therefore, pastors of souls should be enlightened with the light of Jesus, and instructed in His divine science; they should study in His school or Church the art for guiding souls, which can be learned from tradition, the councils, the Sacred Scriptures, and the holy fathers; and prayer and the practice of virtue will fill them with God's light, and save them from becoming blind guides, and hence from falling with those they guide into the ditch. When they consult and follow Jesus, the true light, they walk not in darkness, but they will have the light of life to enlighten all who approach them, and then they will be the light to enlighten all who come to hear them in the house of God.

3rd. Jesus was a disinterested pastor, because He was none of those mercenary pastors who seek themselves and their own interests, who feed on the milk of the sheep and cover themselves with the wool, who rarely trouble themselves about the condition of their flocks, and who, to say the least of their neglect, discharge their duties very imperfectly. Jesus has not made, like the Pharisees, a shameful traffic of His ministration to enrich Himself at the expense of His people, because He spent His days labouring for the conversion and in the guidance of souls living in extreme poverty, and not having whereon to repose His head. His delight was to possess no worldly goods, and to seek only the salvation of souls, and not their temporal goods and interests; He did not use His ministry to please others or to exalt Himself to high offices; He sought His Father's glory only in all His functions, and never His own. When He exercises His ministry with most fruit, and discharges His office of pastor and director with most zeal, then it is He is most humbled, despised, and exposed to the insults of His enemies; and all the glory He gains from

the world is to live and die a pauper on the cross. How happy it would be for the flock of Christ to see the spirit of their first pastor's poverty, and that of the apostles, revived in those who now govern them; if they saw the gospel announced without any leaning to human interests, and their pastors living from day to day only, never caring from whence comes their food and raiment, and labouring like St. Paul for their subsistence. Behold the wonderful progress of the gospel though preached by such self-interested ministers; behold with what effrontery those men preach a gospel which teaches only poverty, a contempt for earthly things, a love of humiliation, and a hidden life. How can they announce the word of God and labour for the salvation of souls with hearts full of ambitious desires; how can they seek to advance themselves, and to acquire a glory and a name whilst under a charge which should make them sigh and weep incessantly? Nothing is easier in those times than to labour in the conversion of souls, when we want for nothing, and when we receive from our mission all the commodities and comforts of this life; but we deceive ourselves if we believe we can convert the world in any other way than Jesus and His apostles converted it.

4th. Jesus was a wise and prudent pastor, and these are qualifications most necessary for all who have the care of souls, because a single imprudence committed in the ministry is frequently the cause of a thousand scandals, often makes the conversion of souls a failure, destroys all the good we did, and paralyzes all our efforts to advance the spiritual well-being of our people. Jesus never said or did anything which was not regulated by this divine wisdom; He constantly consulted His Father, spoke only what He learned from Him, and did only what He saw Him doing. This divine pastor suited His words and His conduct to the condition, the strength, and the dispositions of those to whom He spoke or with whom He came in contact. His chief care, as He teaches us by two comparisons, was to apply Himself to the regulation of the interior before He imposed penances. "No man," says this divine pastor, "seweth a piece of raw cloth to an old garment, otherwise the new piecing taketh away from the old, and there is made a greater rent; and no man putteth new wine into old bottles, otherwise the new wine will burst the bottles, and both the wine will be spilt and the bottles will be lost, but new wine must be put into new bottles."[1] In those two texts He seems to convey that it is right to wait till the heart of man be renewed, or that it be

[1] Mark, ii. 21, 22.

sufficiently strong and touched to be in a condition to bear and support great austerities; and He Himself made a very wise modification with regard to His apostles, by not allowing them to perform such great fasts and austerities as the disciples of St. John the Baptist. He did not at first address such sublime truths to His disciples as would astound them, but He humbled Himself, and when it was necessary He became sublime. He had a great many things to say to them, and as they were not sufficiently advanced He concealed them for future occasions. He gave only milk to those who were in their Christian infancy, and He spoke the sublimest mysteries to those who were perfect. He made the wisdom of His words appear everywhere by His actions and His life; He made them manifest to His disciples and to His enemies, who were always on the alert to take exception to His language and His works. He never said or did anything unbecoming a pastor who came to bring men back to their duties, and place them on the number of His sheep. Sometimes He spoke mildly and sometimes sharply, and sometimes He appeared not to see or hear what was said or done against Him. He did everything at the proper time and place, and always waited for the hour and moment prescribed by His Father. O malice of the human heart, behold what precaution the Son of God had to take in order to edify you and guard Himself against your evil designs; and although He was infinitely wise in His conduct, He was not able to escape the criticism and censure of His enemies, and even to be condemned by the very people who admired this wisdom. The pastors of the Church, like Jesus, the prince of pastors, could not avoid the persecutions of their enemies, but they were comforted on those occasions by the testimony of their conscience, and by the assurances of friends around them, who declared that there was nothing in their actions or conversations contrary to prudence or religion, and that therefore the world censured and condemned them unjustly.

5th. Jesus was a zealous pastor, and zeal in a pastor is one of his most necessary qualifications; and as a true pastor knows His obligations and the value of souls purchased by the blood of Jesus, he will strive to do, at least, as much for his flock as the devil and the world do to damn them. All these reasons should arm and animate him with a holy and ardent zeal for his flock, and should rouse him to follow the example of Jesus, who never ceased to burn with an ardent zeal to procure in all things the glory of His Father and the sanctification of souls—a zeal which overcame all the obstacles

opposed to Him, and surmounted all the sufferings He had to endure in the discharge of His ministry; a zeal directed by charity, and not by the promptings of the human heart; a zeal guided by wisdom, knowledge, and the suggestions of the Holy Ghost; a zeal mild to all, and not indulgent to Himself. He went about the villages and hamlets of the country, instructing the poor and announcing the kingdom of God. He was never weary or fatigued in His search for sinners, although sometimes he was so overwhelmed by the crowds coming to hear His heavenly doctrine, that He had scarcely time, as the gospel says, to take His necessary food. The whole life of this divine pastor was spent in hard labour, and all His mysteries, which are the fruit of His love, demonstrate His ardent zeal to save His sheep, and to protect those whom He had already gained. He died for sinners, and His death was the price of their redemption; and when He was dying He prayed to His Father for grace for them. Neither persecutions, nor humiliations, nor sufferings could in the least damp the ardour of His inextinguishable zeal for the salvation of mankind. How happy we should be when we have pastors animated with a zeal for our salvation as near as possible to that of Jesus.

6th. Jesus was and always shall be a compassionate and patient pastor, and hence St. Paul says to the Hebrews: "We have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities."[1] He bears the sins of man with infinite patience, although He detests them with an infinite hatred, because they are opposed to His eternal and sovereign law, and to His Father's infinite sanctity, and which His omnipotence could punish in an instant with the most extreme facility; and yet behold with what patience He suffers and waits for the conversion of a world plunged into all kinds of iniquity, heresy, schism, paganism, the profanation of holy things, the excesses of impurity and intemperance, and the love of worldly things. None but a God of infinite goodness and mercy could tolerate such infamies, particularly when He has the right and the power to punish them; and not only is God compassionate and patient with great sinners, but He is so with the daily defects, imperfections, humours, fancies, levities, tepidities, and other faults of the just. Behold how much He suffered in this way from His disciples here on earth; behold what compassion He displayed for those people whom He saw wandering about without a pastor, like languishing sheep! Sometimes He would tell them that He loved mercy more than sacrifice, and sometimes He would command them not to pluck up the tares from the field of

[1] Heb. iv. 15.

the Church, but to wait till the harvest-time; and, finally, behold, says St. Paul to the Romans, "His shining patience with those about to perish, with those vessels of His anger prepared for destruction,"[1] whom He rarely punishes till after a long forbearance. Pastors and directors of souls should manifest their great patience to the whole world, to the greatest sinners, and to souls still weak and imperfect; but, instead of this, they sometimes do not allow sufficient time for God's grace to operate on the souls of sinners, and hence they become impatient touching their conversion and amendment of life; and, therefore, they should pray much and wait God's good time in patience.

What are the duties of the sheep to Jesus, their pastor.

Before answering this question we must suppose that there are many who bear the name of Christian externally because they are mixed up with the visible flock of Jesus, but these are ravening wolves and not His true sheep. We do not know those at present, but on the last day, when the eternal pastor, Jesus Christ, shall separate the goats from the sheep, when He will place the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left, when He will admit the sheep into His eternal sheepfold, where there will be but one flock and one shepherd, then we will know who were the true sheep of Jesus, and also those who were so in appearance only. Then we shall discover those vile hypocrites who were vested, as the prophet says, in counterfeit robes, who approached the sacraments, and were present at the devotional assemblies of the faithful, but who did not belong to the true sheep of Jesus, and who consequently did not fulfil their obligations to their pastor. Therefore, we must learn and fulfil these obligations in order to belong to the true sheep of Jesus. These obligations can be reduced to four. 1st. The sheep ought to know their pastor. 2nd. They ought to hear His voice. 3rd. They ought to follow Him. 4th. They should suffer with patience and forbearance.

1st. His sheep ought to know their pastor, Jesus, in His character as Saviour, because they must believe that there can be no remission of sins, and consequently no salvation except by faith in this divine Redeemer. Those who are sick, or inclined to be so, should know Him as the only physician who is able to cure and restore them to health; those who walk on the pathway, and are accelerating their journey to heaven, should regard Him as the only guide to conduct them there; those who are tempted should fly to Him as their strength and support in the battle they are engaged in; and those who

[1] Rom. x. 22.

are already strong and perfect should look up to Him as the source of all the sanctity and perfection they possess. Where could we seek with such confidence a remedy for all our evils as from Him who desires to be all things to us? How could we live away from Him who alone is life and full of grace and truth? It was the recollection of this that moved the great St. Ambrose to speak the following beautiful and at the same time comforting words: "If you desire to be healed of your wounds, He is your physician; if you are being consumed by the fever of your passions, He is your fountain of living water; if you are loaded with the heavy weight of your sins, He is your sanctity and your justice; if you have need of help, He is your strength; if you fear death, He is your life; if you desire heaven, He is the way; if you hate darkness, He is your light; and if you seek food, He is the living bread that cometh down from heaven." What could be wanting to a soul which finds all these advantages in the knowledge of Jesus Christ? This knowledge of Jesus must be fruitful, because His sheep ought to know Him as His Father knows and loves Him, and they should try to please Him in their conduct and in all things, for "he who says he knows Jesus and keepeth not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Therefore, let us not flatter ourselves that we know Jesus and the grandeur and depth of His mysteries, if we give the lie to our professions of faith by our works and a life opposed to His holy maxims; and hence it will not suffice to have this knowledge of Christ and to confess it with our lips, if we deny Him by our works.

2nd. The sheep ought to hear the voice of their pastor with an humble submission and a docile heart, because He speaks to them through all the works of creation, and through all the different events occurring on this earth. He speaks to them in the Sacred Scriptures, in the councils, in the writings of the saints, and through His Church, which is the depository of His will, the interpreter of His word, and the organ through which He explains Himself to mankind. If the sheep of this divine pastor live always near Him, and often converse with Him, they will easily distinguish His voice from that of the thief and the mercenary, because His words are those of eternal life, which speak alone of eternal goods, and a contempt for those that are transitory, and which fill the heart with confidence, peace, joy, and humility. This divine pastor speaks to the hearts of His sheep chiefly in the desert and in solitude, and we should know that a single word from His divine lips is of much more value than all the dis-

courses of men, however eloquent and holy they may be, because the voice of this pastor and spouse of souls draws our hearts away from dejection and despair, and hence the spouse in the canticle says: "The moment my well-beloved spoke to me, I was in a transport of joy, and all within me was changed." Speak, dear pastor, speak to our hearts and to our souls, because then the world can speak to us no more, nor recount its foolish dreams to our ears, for all creatures must be silent when thou speaketh.

3rd. It will not suffice that a sheep will hear the voice of his pastor, he must also follow in His footsteps and imitate His virtues, and he must enter into His feelings and dispositions. He must follow Him with fidelity, submission, courage, and perseverance; he must follow with fidelity by not resisting His grace, and by cheerfully performing all He may demand from him; he must follow with submission by never inquiring after anything this divine pastor should say to him, no matter how painful it may be to human nature and self-love; he must follow with courage in never being disheartened by the difficulties, or cast down by the sufferings his imagination may discover under the guidance of his pastor; he must follow with perseverance by never permitting himself to be seduced from the way his pastor desires to conduct him, because it is to perseverance that Jesus has promised the crown.

4th. Another duty of the sheep of Jesus is to suffer with meekness and never to resist the wicked, but to conquer them by doing them good, to bear bad treatment without murmuring or complaint, to suffer oneself to be led without resistance as a sheep to the slaughter, and to be bound and immolated as they should wish. The martyrs did all this, because they walked to death and suffered inconceivable torments with a patience and meekness which astonished even their persecutors. And Jesus, their pastor, gave them the grand example of this patience, because He was led up the hill of Calvary and on to the cross as a sheep to the slaughter, and, like a lamb in the hands of the shearer, He opened not His mouth. The character of the true sheep should be sweetness, simplicity, and goodness to the whole world, and particularly to those who persecute us. The Christian, educated in the bosom of Christ's mercy and goodness, should never be angry with his persecutors and enemies, but should look upon them with the bowels of mercy and forgiveness, and, far from desiring vengeance on them, he should stand defenceless like a lamb, and oppose only meekness and patience to the cruelty and barbarity of his enemies.

In what state are those Christians who are not guided by Jesus, their true pastor.

Nothing more sad and deplorable could be conceived than the condition of such souls, because as they have no other guide than their unbridled passions, or some blind conductor who favours those passions, they go on from abyss to abyss, and from precipice to precipice, and from one crime to another worse; and each fresh object that presents itself to their sinful desires stimulates them to pursue that object with renewed ardour, and by this course of crime the former darkness of their souls thickens, and the corruption of their hearts becomes more loathsome; and if they sometimes appear to return to Jesus, it is only in appearance, and to make their separation from Him still more distant. We see a picture of the deplorable condition of those souls in the sickly crowd of Jews which attracted the compassion of Jesus, and which He saw scattered about on the ground like sheep without a shepherd. There are thousands of unfortunate worldlings weak and afflicted, like this infirm crowd, with different passions which seduce them to eternal death; they are languishing, because they cannot find any repose from the things of this world; they are crouched upon the earth, because all their powers and affections are earthly; they are scattered about in worldly assemblies as so many waifs and wanderers, not knowing where they are going, and exposed to the assaults of demons and delivered up to their passions, which devour them like so many ferocious beasts. Ambition elevates them in order to hurl them down; fear casts them down, and avarice makes them bitter; some small worldly loss makes them despair, and luxury satiates them; sadness makes them insupportable to themselves and to all others; pride stimulates them to search for worldly praise and esteem; if refused, they are provoked; and if granted their request, they are still more so; the impious are lacerated by a thousand remorses—they move on to death in desparation, and, continually falling under the sway of the infernal wolf, they become his eternal prey; and hence God complains, through His prophet Ezechiel, saying: "My sheep have been dispersed through different places, and they became the prey of all the savage beasts."[1]

EJACULATION TO JESUS, PASTOR AND GUIDE OF SOULS.

O Jesus, pastor and bishop of my soul, I adore you under that amiable character which your love for us caused you to take. How unfortunate I was to separate myself from you in order to follow the

[1] Ezech. xxxiv. 5.

desires of my heart. I have been seduced by the appearance of a false good and an imaginary pleasure, and, like a straying sheep, I attended to the voice of the stranger, the voice of the devil, and the world. These blind guides seduced me by their lying language, and I followed them and thus separated from you, where I could easily find my peace, my happiness, and my life; and in this sad state, and deprived of your guiding counsel, I went about continually straying until I drifted into an arid and desert land, where I became exposed to the fury of the lion and the wolf. Oh, what a terrible misfortune! those beasts soon discovered my abandonment, and forthwith filled my soul with countless wounds and almost entirely devoured me.

My adorable Jesus, you saw me in this frightful desert under the power of the infernal wolf, and you compassionated my fallen condition, because in the abundance of your mercy and goodness you came to seek after and rescue me. But, my dear Jesus, your love was not satisfied in seeking and finding me in my extreme weakness, and unable to return to you, because you lifted me up and carried me on you shoulders, in your spirit, in your heart, and in your arms. You carried me in your spirit to keep me in your memory, in your heart to love me and to unite me to you, in your arms to heal my wounds and offer me to your Father. My dear and adorable Redeemer, you are always devoted to my spiritual and temporal interests; you watch continually over me to save and protect me from the snares of the evil one; you conducted me into wholesome pasturages, where my soul was nourished with those words of eternal life which flowed from your adorable lips, with all the graces you gave me, with your adorable body in the holy Eucharist, and with the vivifying waters of your spirit which extinguished all its thirst. Finally, you made all things for your sheep, and you gave them all you are and all you have; your love never restrains itself, and you are never satisfied at all you did and are doing for your flock; and you loved and have chosen me from eternity as one of your flock. Moreover, your love for me is gratuitous, because everything in me deserves your hatred and vengeance; you had no need for my services when seeking after me with such zeal—you are enough for yourself; and, therefore, my most charitable Saviour, why do you bestow so much affection on one of your sheep so ungrateful as I am and have been?

Ah, my Jesus, I see it now; I know that you alone are capable of true love. O my Saviour, hold me up, feed, guide, and watch over me; bind me so closely to you that nothing will be able to separate me from you; never suffer me to wander away from you even for

a single moment, nor to run after the vain amusements of this world. My divine pastor, as you know the individual wants of all your sheep, I shall never cease to pray to you to make me attentive to your voice, docile to your orders, obedient to your will, and exact in fulfilling your commands. O my Jesus, grant that I shall walk perseveringly and with courage to the place of my sacrifice, that I will always suffer myself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter, without murmur or complaint, and that I may endure peacefully and in silence all the bad treatment which the world may inflict upon me.

I know, dear Lord, the necessity of a visible pastor to conduct me to you, the prince of pastors; give me, in your great mercy, one according to your heart, modelled after your divine example, and animated with your spirit; give me one so enlightened in the truths and precepts of the gospel and the Church, that he will be able to guide me according to those rules; one who will not overlook my defects, but who will kindly and meekly correct them; one who will be able to lift me from my despondency; one to comfort me in tepidity and to urge me to advance daily in virtue; and, above all, save me from those mercenary pastors who are more zealous for their own interests than for the salvation of souls. Give me, dear Redeemer, a guide who by his learning and example will point out to me the road that leads to heaven. Finally, Lord Jesus, be my pastor yourself before all others; and grant that I may never lose sight of you, that I may be always consulting you in holy prayer, and that I may always distinguish your voice from that of the stranger and seducer, for this is one of the greatest advantages your sheep can possess. Alas! my Saviour, how can I find out that I will be one of those sheep who are to dwell with you for eternity. O truth, hidden and unknown for my sake! how you humble yourself for me, and how just that I should be humbled beneath your omnipotent hand; and it is also just and worthy of the mercy and love which you always testified for me, that I should hope and have full confidence in being numbered amongst your sheep hereafter. This is a mystery still hidden from me, for you alone, my Jesus, know those who are yours.

The sheep are mixed up here on earth with the goats and the wolves, but you will separate them on the last day, when you will appear like a shepherd at the head of his flock to count his sheep, to distinguish them from the strangers, and to reject and separate those which do not belong to it. So likewise, dear Lord, you will exile for ever from your presence all those who will not bear the brand of your sheep, and when the separation will be made you will ascend

with your sheep up to heaven, where there will be but one pastor, one flock, one sheepfold, and one Lamb of God. And on your throne in heaven you will be their Lamb and their Pastor for ever, you will conduct them to the fountains of living waters, where they will be inebriated with the sweets and joys of eternity. Grant, beloved Redeemer, through your great mercy and through the merits of your death and passion, that I may be one of those sheep which shall be near you, and without the least fear of ever being separated from you through the endless ages of eternity. Amen.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON JESUS, THE SPOUSE OF THE CHURCH AND OF OUR SOULS.

JESUS compares Himself to a bridegroom in order to point out the alliance and union He contracted with mankind. The sacrament of marriage is a figure of the union of Christ with His Church, and hence St. Paul says to the Ephesians: "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church;"[1] and in this spiritual and divine marriage we are the spouses and Christ is the bridegroom. This union receives this character in many parts of the Sacred Scriptures, and Christ Himself has adopted it. St. John, the precursor of this divine Spouse, who was so highly esteemed by the Jews, and whom they suspected was the Messiah, said to them that he was only "a friend of the bridegroom, and that he that hath the bride is the bridegroom;"[2] as if he had said that Jesus came to unite Himself to His Church, and to make a new alliance with her very different from that which God formerly contracted with the people of the Old Law. Jesus adopted this character of spouse because He said, when defending His disciples against those of His precursor, St. John, who censured them because they did not fast like them: "Can the children of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them; but the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they shall fast;"[3] that is, when Jesus will be separated from them by death. This is the divine Spouse for whom the virgins waited to enter with Him the marriage hall, and to live eternally united to Him in heaven. In this chapter we will consider Jesus under this amiable character, and we will give these two important instructions—1st. Where did Jesus contract this holy marriage, and in what manner and by what means did He contract it?

[1] Ephes. v. 32. [2] John, iii. 29. [3] Matt. ix. 15.

2nd. What does the spouse owe to the bridegroom? All we are to say here regarding the spouse and bridegroom, or the marriage of Christ with our souls, is all most pure and holy, and has no reference whatsoever to flesh and blood, or marriages as they are contracted amongst Christians.

How did Jesus become spouse of the Church, and where did He contract that alliance with her?

God desired from eternity to be united to man, and the crimes and iniquities of man could never be able to alter that desire. The patriarchs and the other saints of the Old Law yearned for this union of the Word with our human nature, and when the spouse in the canticle demands from God "to give her a kiss of His mouth,"[1] she conveys by that expression her desire to be united to the eternal Word of the Father. The entire law and all that was grand in it were preparations for these nuptials, or the marriage which God wished to contract with mankind; and the prophets foretold this spouse, and spoke of His beauty, His grandeur, His riches, and all the blessings He was to bring with Him into this world. He came at last, says St. John, when the Word, who was God, became flesh, and then it was that God united Himself to man. O admirable alliance, in which the Son of God united Himself to man, and actually became man; and still continuing to be God and retaining all His divine attributes, and man, still preserving his nature, becomes the participator of the divine nature. Oh, how grand is this alliance in which God and man are linked in one flesh and in one single person! This alliance or marriage is eternal and never can be dissolved, because God will be eternally united to man and man to God.

The stainless womb of Mary was, as it were, the nuptial couch where the only-begotten Son of God united Himself to our human nature; and forthwith after entering this most pure sanctuary, He was made man, in order that man should become God; and He consummated this alliance with man on the cross when blood and water issued from His side, pierced with a lance. When Eve was formed from the side of Adam, she became his spouse and a figure of the Church as well; and hence St. Augustine says "that God put Adam into a profound sleep in order that Eve would originate from him, and Jesus sleeps the repose of death on the cross in order that the Church, the second Eve, would be formed from Him. Whilst Adam slept God drew a rib from His side to build the first woman on it; so likewise whilst Jesus slept in death, of which Adam's sleep

[1] Cant. i. 1.

was a figure, the Roman soldier opened His side with a lance, that the blood and water flowing from it would form the sacraments to sanctify His Church, and make her His spouse." These words of St. Augustine clearly prove that the Church is at once the daughter and the spouse of Jesus, and that when this divine Saviour awoke by His resurrection from His sleep of death He said of His Church what Adam said after his mysterious sleep to Eve: "Behold, you are bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh."[1] Jesus united Himself to every part of His Church in the sacrament of baptism, where our souls consummate their espousals with Christ after being purified by "the laver of water in the word of life."[2] A mutual promise and contract are made in this sacrament between Jesus and the person baptised, because we engage there by a solemn promise to renounce the devil, his works and his pomps, and to cling to Jesus; and this divine Saviour engages, on His part, to give us grace and faith and other virtues, and in addition imperishable blessings in the kingdom of heaven. We swear an inviolable fidelity to him in this sacrament, and He promises to be faithful to us and never to forsake us until we first abandon Him.

Who is the spouse of Christ, and from what peoples is she formed?

The Church is the spouse of Christ, and she is formed from the Jews and Gentiles, that is from a countless number of persons whom God rescued from the powers of darkness; but Jesus repudiated the Jewish nation by a judgment at once terrible and incomprehensible, because it refused to contract the nuptial alliance. They received the first invitation, but the love of worldly things, and a presumptuous confidence in themselves, caused them to refuse the vocation by not believing in Jesus Christ, and by refusing to acknowledge Him as the veritable spouse who came to contract with them and mankind a new alliance instead of the old dispensation; and hence God gave them a bill of divorce, which they retain in their dispersion all over the world. The Sacred Scripture predicted this divorce and repudiation, and the cause why these people were excluded from the espousals—an exclusion which they well deserved, because they refused to acknowledge Christ as the true spouse, and hence He abandoned this ungrateful people and united Himself to the Gentiles, as the prophet Osee predicted when he said: "I will say to that which was not my people thou art my people, and they will say thou art my God."[3] This reprobation of the Jews was prefigured by the marriage of Moses to an Ethiopian, whose dark complexion typified the Gentiles buried in idolatry and all kinds of crime; and it was

[1] Gen. ii. 23. [2] Ephes. v. 26. [3] Osee, ii. 24.

prefigured by the marriage of Osee to a female of ill-fame by command of God for her conversion.

Who could conceive that God would select for His spouse a people so corrupt and so far separated from Him? and yet, in the excess of His mercy and love, He did so; and in order to see a little of the extent of our Redeemer's goodness in this affair, we must consider the condition of this people before they were exalted to the august character of His spouse. St. Augustine says they had three great defects before their vocation to Christianity. 1st. They were slaves to Satan. 2nd. They were odious in the sight of God. 3rd. They were excessively poor in everything good, and from this deplorable state, and from us in particular, that Christ designed to form His Church.

We were slaves to Satan, to our passions, and to worldly love; and we sold ourselves to the prince of darkness, and having thus become his captives we obeyed him as our master.

We were odious in the sight of God, and polluted in our hearts, our souls, and our actions—in our hearts by inclinations the most shameful, in our souls by error and idolatry, and in our actions by an unbridled licentiousness, and we lost every trace of that beauty which God gave us at creation.

We were poor and miserable, because without Christ and His grace we could have no share in His promises. We were strangers to His divine alliance, estranged from His life, deprived of all spiritual good, and like mendicants covered with rags and wretchedness; such was our sad state before Jesus united Himself to us, and became the spouse of our Church and of our souls.

But our good God, always rich in mercy and love, did not leave us long in this pitiable condition, and hence St. Augustine says: "Although He was infinitely above us in dignity, beauty, and riches, He condescended to redeem us from the horrible servitude of sin and Satan, and made us free by making us children of God." And speaking through His inspired penman, St. John, He says: "I will not now call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his master doth; but I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known to you."[1] We were delivered from the slavery of the devil by the precious blood of the Lamb, because the Church was sullied and disfigured, and this adorable blood washed her bright and beautiful in His eyes, and as St. Paul says to the Ephesians: "That He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver

[1] John, xv. 15.

of water in the Word of life, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having a spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."[1] Jesus was moved to compassion at the poverty of her who was to be His spouse, He fortuned her with Himself, and enriched her from His own inexhaustible treasury; He invested her with His merits, gave her all He received from His Father, and communicated all kinds of spiritual favours and graces to her; and hence St. Paul says to the Gentiles who were received into the Church: "In all things you are made rich in Him, in all utterance and knowledge, so that nothing is now wanting to you in any grace."[2]

Let us enter still deeper into the consideration of all the blessings and benefits which the Church, that is her children, receive from their spouse Jesus; but the combined intelligence of man could not comprehend, nor his reason fathom, the countless number of those graces, because faith only could enable us to discover and believe them.

1st. The faithful who constitute the Church are the spouses of Jesus, and therefore they are entitled to all the rights of their spouse, because they are one thing with Him; and hence St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Now you are the body of Christ and members of member;"[3] and again he says to the Ephesians: "And they shall be two in one flesh;"[4] and so much are they so, that there is a communion of goods and of ills, of grandeur and humiliations between them. They are called Christians after Him, and they bear His badges, just as a female of low birth bears the name and wears the dignity of the grandee to whom she is wedded. If he be a king, she becomes a queen, and is invested with all the rights and privileges of her husband. So, too, as we are Christians and bear the name of Christ, our arms are those of our spouse, His cross and His gospel; we become, with Him, kings, priests, victims, and children of God; and as we have a part in His dignities we should have a part in His humiliations, His poverty, and His sufferings, because it is the duty and should be the desire of the faithful spouse to follow the destiny of her bridegroom.

2nd. St. Paul says that as we are spouses of Christ, "we are flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone,"[5] because in order to be espoused to Him we have taken our birth from His birth, His merits, and His sufferings, and by this means we make only one with Christ, a union represented by the sacrament of marriage, and taught by

[1] Ephes. v. 26, 27. [2] 1 Cor. i. 5, 7. [3] 1 Cor. xii. 27.
[4] Ephes. v. 31. [5] Ephes. v. 30.

St. Paul when he says: "This is a great sacrament in Jesus Christ and in the Church."[1] This union is still greater, because it is an image of God's alliance with man, an alliance by virtue of which we have no right any longer over our bodies, our souls, or our earthly goods, because Jesus has acquired them all by His nuptial right and as bridegroom of our souls; and so binding are those espousals that we cannot make any other use of ourselves than according to His will without committing a terrible infidelity. But this divine Saviour, Jesus, yields all His rights to His spouses by an admirable effect of His infinite love, because He gives them a right over His adorable body in the holy Eucharist, and over all His graces, His spirit, His virtues, and His merits. He makes His secrets known to them, because we read in the Canticles of His love and tenderness for His spouses and His affection for His Church.

What did Jesus employ to form this divine alliance with His Church and with our souls?

He made use of His word, His blood, His spirit, and His sacraments, and particularly the sacrament of the Eucharist, to contract this spiritual marriage with us and His Church.

1st. He made use of the ministry of His divine word, of His faith, and of His precepts, because the apostles, at their own request, were sent by Him as envoys and ambassadors to preach His gospel, and make known to the Gentiles His desire to be united to them by what He calls His nuptials; and they believed the word preached to them, and thus received the gospel as the contract of their spiritual nuptials. We find in the gospel all that Christ demands from His spouse, and all He gives and promises to her, and there we find all the engagements He made to her, and all she made to Him. Pastors and preachers discharge the office of envoys to sinners when they announce to them the holy truths of the gospel, when they exhort them to be united to Jesus Christ, and when they administer the sacraments, and then Jesus completes the alliance by infusing His faith into the hearts of those converted; and hence St. Paul, quoting the prophet Jeremiah, says: "For this is the testament which I will make with the house of Israel, I will give my laws into their mind, and in their heart I will write them, and I will be their God and they will be my people."[2]

2nd. Jesus makes use of His blood also to unite Himself to us, and it is called the blood of the new and eternal alliance. Moses was the minister of the ancient alliance which God made with His

[1] Ephes. v. 32. [2] Heb. viii. 10.

people, and which was sealed with the blood of animals; but the new alliance is sealed with the blood of Jesus, the Lamb without stain, and we are watered with this adorable blood in the holy sacraments, the ministers of which are His priests.

3rd. Jesus gave His spirit to His Church, not only as a pledge and security of the promise He made to take her as His spouse, but also to be the bond of charity uniting them in one. The Holy Spirit is the substantial love of the Father and the Son, and we and the Church have received this Spirit as a precious gift uniting us to Jesus, the chief and spouse of our souls.

4th. This divine union is made not only by the Holy Spirit, but by the sacrament of our Lord's body, which we receive in the holy Eucharist, where a commingling is made of our soul with the soul of Jesus, and of His divinity with our humanity, and this is represented by the mixture of wine and water offered in the chalice at the altar—the water signifies our humanity, so weak and tasteless for the things of the Lord, and the wine represents the power of God's grace which unites itself to our nature. This union is furthermore figured by the bread, formed of many grains, and which, after being consecrated at the holy sacrifice, becomes the body of Jesus; so, too, when we receive the holy Eucharist, He and we are no longer two but one, just as the bride and bridegroom become one by the sacrament of marriage.

Could a union grander or more holy be conceived, and will it last for ever?

It will last for eternity, because God promised, through His prophet Osee, that it would, saying: "I will espouse thee to me for ever, and I will espouse thee to me in justice, and judgment, and in mercy, and in commiserations; and I will espouse thee to me in faith, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord."[1] We will now consider in detail the language which declares what Christ has done for His Church.

1st. God promised that this holy and divine alliance never shall be dissolved by death or any other cause, because Jesus can never die, and His Church shall subsist for ever in spite of all the efforts of her enemies. Neither persecutions, nor heresies, nor the fall or apostacy of some of her priests and children will ever be able to separate her from her spouse, because she will continue always attached to His faith and love, and will always remain united to her by an abiding protection, and by the presence of the Holy

[1] Osee, ii. 19, 20.

Ghost, who will govern and conduct her here on earth, and who will be united to her through eternity.

2nd. This is an alliance of justice, because it was after her justification that Christ united Himself to her, and that He became her justice, her sanctification, and her glory for eternity.

3rd. He made an alliance of judgment with His spouse, because He became united to her after He pronounced a terrible judgment on the Jewish people, whom He cast off—a judgment which this unfortunate people carry with them in their wanderings over this earth.

4th. Jesus made an alliance of compassion and mercy with His Church, because He was moved to compassion at the deplorable state of the Gentiles, and because it was a purely gratuitous effect of His mercy that He called them to the sublime dignity of His spouse.

5th. Jesus promised to maintain an inviolable fidelity for His Church, because He will always love her, and because she will always be the eternal object of His complaisancy; but He cannot bestow these blessings on all the souls He espoused in baptism, because it happens that many of those souls become unfaithful spouses by forsaking their spouse for the world and creatures, and because they give their hearts and actions, which belong entirely to Jesus, to those creatures; and hence St. James calls those souls "adulterous" who are separated from Him, and are enemies to God. These souls have no further claim on this divine spouse, they carry in their consciences their bill of divorce, their crimes are recorded on it, and if they persevere in sin the promises they made at baptism will bear undeniable evidence of their infidelity and broken vows before the Judge of the living and the dead. Oh, what a terrible misfortune for these poor souls!

They will be separated for ever from Jesus, their spouse, and between Him and them an eternal divorce shall begin to exist the moment He shall have pronounced the following terrible sentence upon them: "Depart from me into everlasting fire,"[1] to suffer the penalties of your infidelities; depart, He will say, into that abyss the fires of which shall always burn, and never shall efface the mark and character of that union contracted between you and me. Alas! they shall never hear there the loving voice of the bridegroom nor of the bride, because all the sweetness and consolation they formerly found in their once holy alliance is now stilled and dead, and their only inheritance shall be eternal suffering and despair. But, dear Jesus, cannot a soul that was often unfaithful to you be reconciled to

[1] Matt. xxv. 41.

your love, and become again your spouse? Yes, God is so rich in mercy that He never rejects a spouse which sincerely returns to Him, and He is always disposed to forget her past infidelities when she does penance for them. But in order to become again the sister, the spouse, and the well-beloved of Jesus, she must manifest her regret for the past by her tears, her humiliations, her mortifications, her ardent love for God, and her entire separation from creatures and worldly pursuits. Behold how God invites, through His prophet Jeremiah, those unfaithful souls to repentance who violated the sanctity of the alliance He contracted with them: "Daughter, says He, thou hast prostituted thyself to many lovers; nevertheless, return to me and I will receive thee."[1] And He strengthens the above invitation when He says, through the mouth of the same prophet: "Therefore, at the least from this time, call to me, thou art my Father and the guide of my virginity."[2] Oh, what goodness and love from a God to His ungrateful and rebellious creatures! All the graces and blessings I now offer you, He says, should oblige you to address me as your Father, and should induce you to return from your sinful wanderings. Now that you are fatigued in the ways of iniquity, now that you know by sad experience that creatures never can satisfy you, now when you can be reconciled to me after abusing all my goodness and love, now that my grace possesses you and that I am unmindful of your former ingratitude, now that you possess everything necessary for the renewal of your alliance, and that I am ready to stretch forth the hand of mercy to you, I say return to your early nuptials. O Christian souls, how can you resist an invitation so reasonable, so loving, so strong, and so pressing as this.

Are virgins, consecrated to God by a vow of virginity, spouses of Christ in a more special manner than ordinary Christians?

According to the traditions of the holy fathers, virgins are, in a most special and perfect manner, spouses of Christ, because there are less obstacles to their close union with Jesus in that holy state than to the faithful, because they are free from the cares and anxieties of married life, and can devote their entire time to the Lord, whom they have chosen for their portion. Like the ordinary faithful, they are united to Jesus through the sacraments, but what the faithful are not, they belong to Jesus by a consecration they freely made to Him of their souls and bodies, upon either of which no mortal man can ever have the least demand; they belong to Him by a consecration which imposes on them a new obligation to aspire to the greatest

[1] Jer. iii. 1. [2] Jer. iii. 4.

sanctity of soul and body, to the greatest estrangement from the world and creatures, to the greatest mortification of their senses, and to the most exact imitation of Jesus, whom they have chosen as their model and their inheritance. The desires and anxieties to amass fortunes for families, and to raise themselves in the world, cannot be impediments to the perfect union of the virgin with Christ, because they are for ever free from these embarrassments. The pleasures of the senses cannot seduce them from the love and the union they vowed to their divine spouse, because they renounced all these, and their interior and exterior life forms them for this holy alliance. Finally, all the holy fathers declare that the state of virginity is much more perfect than that of the faithful, because the nearer they approach to Jesus, whom they adopted as their model, the higher must be their perfection; and as the Church is the spouse of Jesus, and as virgins are the most noble and illustrious portion of it, it follows that they are, in a most special manner, the spouses of the Son of God, and consequently obliged to a sanctity much greater and more perfect than the ordinary faithful.

What obligations do we owe to Jesus, our spouse?

We became His spouses at baptism, as was stated before, and therefore we should always appear in His presence invested with the nuptial robe we received there; we ought to be ever faithful to Him and to love Him with a pure and disinterested love, because sanctity, fidelity, and love, are the three principal duties we are obliged to discharge towards our spouse, Jesus Christ.

1st. A soul elevated to the happy rank of spouse to Jesus ought to be most holy before God, not only because it is united to Jesus, but also because it is a member of that Church which is holy in Him who founded, formed, and has chosen it as His spouse, holy in the mysteries it celebrates and believes in, holy in the sacraments she distributes to her children, holy in the doctrine she teaches and the morality she professes, holy in her precepts, her ceremonies, and the countless thousands of her members who despise the things of this world, to whom the least shadow of sin is a horror, who die to themselves, who live only for God, and who are always in heaven through the faith and lively hope that animate them. The grand design Jesus had in delivering Himself to death for His Church was, "to make her full of glory before Him, and without stain or wrinkle, so that she may be holy and irreprehensible in His presence."

The sanctity required by Jesus from His spouses consists not only in all exemption from crime, but also from defects and a continual

effort to wipe away from their hearts and purify them from those faults which are inevitable to our fallen nature. This is the sanctity necessary for all who wish to be united to Jesus in heaven, where nothing defiled can enter—a sanctity which constitutes the entire beauty of the spouse, who will be perfect only at the end of time, when she will appear as St. John paints her in his Apocalypse: "Encompassed with the glory of God and a light like a precious stone;"[1] a spouse prepared for the nuptials, invested with the new man, and with His merits, His sanctity, and His glory. Then she will appear without stain, or sin, or any other defect, because she will be purified in the blood of the Lamb; and she will be without wrinkle, because she will have nothing of the old man in her. Her heart, and soul, and body, and every portion of her, will be renovated, and God will wipe away her tears; death shall no more assail her, her weeping and her labours will then be ended, she will be consummated in a perfect union with God, and will follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth. Then the angels and saints will cry out in transports of joy: "Let us rejoice and be glad, and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come and His spouse has prepared herself."[2] This will be the end of time, the consummation of sin, and the perfection of the Church; and then she will enter into the bosom of the divinity, free from every blemish and crowned with every virtue; and if we wish to be glorified with Jesus and His children in heaven we must possess this sanctity.

The second obligation we owe to Jesus, our spouse, is fidelity, which consists in never violating the promises we made to Him at our baptism, in the sacraments of penance and the holy Eucharist, or on the day of our consecration by a religious profession; because we promised on those occasions never to belong to any other than to Him, and hence He says in Deuteronomy that "He is a jealous God,"[3] and St. James says: "To envy doth the spirit covet which dwelleth in you."[4] He does not wish us to give our affection to any creature even for a moment, nor to give to anything the love we owe to Him alone, because He is so jealous that the least infidelity, a word too freely spoken, a curious glance, a mere suspicion, or the smallest inclination to dissipation displeases Him. Alas, how often have we seen that those small beginnings were the cause of such strong infidelities as to make us violate the allegiance we vowed to God and break the promises we engaged to fulfil. Therefore, we should dread the least fault, and should struggle incessantly against that itching

[1] Apoc. xxi. 11. [2] Apoc. xix. 7. [3] Deut. iv. 20. [4] James, iv. 5.

we harbour for this world, because if we once begin to love it we become forthwith unfaithful souls, and we merit to be cast off for ever.

The fidelity of the spouse of Jesus consists also in exactly following and never resisting the motions of grace, and the lights and inspirations of the Holy Ghost; and when He comes knocking at the gate of her soul, she cannot resist such a loving and pressing solicitation without committing a great infidelity, because her fidelity should be so tenacious as to keep her always disposed to follow her spouse, whether He should wish to call her into solitude or into the world, to Calvary or to Thabor, to pains or to consolations, to external acts of charity or to a hidden life of labour, to adversity and to poverty or to a life of affluence and of prosperity. We should never inquire whether the things demanded from us by our spouse are great or small, or difficult or easy, because it should be sufficient for us to know that He wishes us to perform them. If we wish to follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth in heaven, we must strive to follow Him here on earth wherever He desires to conduct us, because the fidelity which love inspires should be undivided and should reject everything to please Jesus, whom it loves. If Jesus is all to us and we all to Him by the alliance we have contracted with Him, we cannot love creatures without being unjust, impure, ungrateful, and unfaithful to Him. We would be unjust, because it is true injustice to love anything preferable to God, or at least without a reference to Him, who is the supreme and sovereign Master of all things; and we would be ungrateful, because we would despise our first lover, God, who filled us with His blessings, and enriched us with His countless spiritual gifts. We would be impure, because, says St. Augustine, "The soul cannot turn away from her God and attach herself to a creature and make use of it, without losing her beauty and staining her nuptial robe." Finally, we would be unfaithful by violating the pledge we gave Him, when by a solemn contract, ratified at our baptism, we became His spouses—a contract written in the gospel and in heaven as well, by which we engaged before God and His altar to renounce the devil, his works and his pomps, and all attachments to this world, in order to belong entirely to Jesus; and we would be still further unfaithful by violating our promises and allowing the false charms of this world to persuade us to abandon Christ, to whom we entirely belong. All those promises have been witnessed in heaven and on this earth, and they are sacred, immutable, eternal, and indispensable. Oh, let us dread the insinuations of this seducer; and hence St. Paul, fearing this terrible enemy, says to

the Corinthians: "I fear lest as the serpent seduced Eve by his subtility, so your minds should be corrupted and fall from the simplicity that is in Christ;"[1] "for," says he, "I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."[2]

The third thing which we owe to Jesus, our spouse, is a chaste and voluntary love and a fervent, constant attachment. In order to love Him with a chaste and voluntary affection, we must love Him more than all His gifts and favours, because He gives us these to draw us to Him; and when we become attached to them, we love them, and forget Him who gave them, and, consequently, we do Him a great injustice. Alas! what a poor spouse she must be who loves only on account of the gifts she receives from her bridegroom. And what comparison could there be between Jesus and the favours He dispenses? A soul truly faithful, and loving Jesus with a chaste love, says to Him with a heart full of tenderness: My Jesus, deprive me of all perishable goods and temporal consolations; but give me Thyself, who art my only desire here and in heaven. Her only fear should be to displease Him, lest He should leave her exposed to the enemies encompassing her, and ready to corrupt and ruin her purity; and this is why she so often cries out to her spouse to come and shield her against the temptations which the devil and the world present to her. But when she is animated with the Holy Ghost, and always faithful to Jesus, she cries out in a transport of holy love: "Come, Lord Jesus, come." The unfaithful spouse, says St. Augustine, is always fearing that her spouse would come and surprise her wandering; but the faithful spouse is always unhappy when her spouse does not quickly come, and hence she has a continual desire and a longing expectation that He will soon come and possess her in peace, without the least fear of ever losing Him. This expectation to meet her bridegroom makes her sorrowful in her exile, and makes her long with a holy earnestness to be delivered from her tenement of clay, in which she dwells a captive. But there are very few persons who know these holy desires and ineffable sighs of the spouse, because very few love Jesus as they ought, and because the love of present things prevents them from longing after Him as they should; and hence when they hear that the bridegroom cometh, they are troubled and seek to fly and hide from Him. But the faithful spouse, who loves her bridegroom with a pure love, is not unhappy when she hears that her bridegroom cometh, because she goes forth

[1] 2 Ep. xi. 3. [2] 2 Ep. xi. 2.

to meet Him with all the joyous desires of her heart, and because she desires nothing so much as to see and live with Him.

The spouse of Jesus ought to possess a fervent love, because nothing is more dangerous to piety than tepidity, which is so difficult to cure. We do not perceive the danger of this state because we do not commit great sins whilst in it, but, on the contary, we perform acts of religion and of devotion; but without faith all this devotion is tasteless to the heart, and always accompanied with a terrible indifference, and gone through as a matter of propriety or for pure fashion-sake. We must, therefore, bear in mind that love without fervour can scarcely be called love—it is rather an expiring fire which never can be rekindled with the few sparks still visible. The true spouse of Christ is always so fervent, and the ardour which consumes her is so pressing, that she does nothing with negligence; she hurries to prayer as to a place where she can entertain herself with her spouse; she flies to the altar, where she expects to find and to possess the only object of her love; she welcomes with joy every occasion which enables her to manifest her love for Jesus; and hence neither mortifications nor penances can hold her back from seeking her well-beloved. She interrupts her sleep to pray to Him during the night, and she seeks Him during the day in the faithful discharge of her obligations. She seeks Him in all creatures, and speaks something to them touching the grand object of her love; and her love and ardour are so intense that she believes she sees and is with Him everywhere. Nothing can diminish or cool the fervour of her desires, because the more she knows and loves Jesus, the more she yearns to know and love Him still more. Where can we find souls animated with this burning charity? Scarcely can we find them anywhere, because tepidity and indolence are paramount in almost every place; faith is not lively enough, and charity is not only cooling, but daily diminishing in us, and all without our knowledge. Our heavenly spouse has no love for souls infected with a longing for riches, nor for souls who do not possess riches as if they had them not. He rejects them and vomits them out of His mouth, because they are unworthy to wear His livery or to hold an intimate union with Him.

The love of a spouse for Jesus should be constant and should not change or be interrupted; and as He is eternal, He wishes that His alliance with us would be eternal also; and hence He abhors every kind of change, and detests those who are with Him to-day and with the world to-morrow. The holy fathers never felt such love as this, and they believed that those who love so inconsistently could not love

God at all. How could a man love God who is weak enough to fall at the first glance of a sinful object, and who severs His union with Jesus at the first temptation? Is there anything in Jesus to make us abandon Him for any other object? Is He not sufficiently good, holy, and amiable for us, or are the sufferings and crosses attached to His service the cause of our change? If this be so, why do we forget that we are bound to bear as much of His cross as of His glory, and that His humiliations should be as worthy of our admiration as His grandeur? If the hope of one day possessing Him in glory comforts and consoles us under the weight of all we suffer, we should remember that it is only through tribulations and sufferings we can gain this happiness. Jesus is always amiable whether He comforts or afflicts us, because He is always the same in Himself and towards us; and hence He never changes, and we likewise should be firm and constant in love for Him, because those only who persevere to the end shall be saved.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, SPOUSE OF THE CHURCH AND OF FAITHFUL SOULS.

I adore you, my Jesus, spouse of souls, you are the only Son of God, King of heaven and of earth, full of glory and of majesty, supremely great and rich; you are that celestial spouse whose beauty attracted so many souls to follow and to love you. Permit me to consider and to contemplate this beauty with the spouse in the canticle who says: "My beloved is white and ruddy, and chosen out of thousands."[1] Yes, my Saviour Jesus Christ, you are the most beautiful amongst the children of men, but your beauty is internal and divine, which faith and love alone can discover; you shine by your whiteness, because you are sanctity itself, the splendour of your Father, the image of the invisible God, and the light and sun of all the spirits that enlighten all men who come into this world.

No one was ever able to convict you of the least fault or imperfection, because your are an unsullied mirror. You gave your beauty to all creatures and to all souls, because you washed them all in your blood; you shine out in your ruddiness because of the blood you shed for us on the cross. You reign on this earth through the beauty you acquired by your sufferings and blood, and you are not only beautiful and amiable in your divinity, but in your humanity, through which you suffered to make us your spouses. You are beautiful in the crib

[1] Cant. v. 10.

swathed in poor bandages ; your are beautiful humbled and annihilated on the cross, where you were made the opprobrium of men without faith ; and, finally, you were chosen from amongst thousands, because you deserved an infinite exaltation over angels, men, and all creatures, and because St. Paul says to the Romans that as man "you were predestined and chosen before all time," and to be "before all others the Son of God,"[1] by the union of your humanity with your divine personality. But, my adorable Jesus, remember the pitiable condition of my soul, and how wounded, poor, and deformed it was when you, who had no need of creatures, and who were always sufficient for yourself, descended from heaven to search her out and contract a marriage with her all spiritual and divine. You condescended to ask her to this noblest of espousals, and you did so with the greatest sweetness ; and when she refused this ineffable proposal, you overcame her resistance and induced her to consent, and you charged all the rest upon yourself.

I know I shall never be able to admire with sufficient gratitude the goodness and generosity of my God ; you, my Jesus, enriched my soul with your gifts, you made her beautiful and pleasing to your eyes, and when she was a captive you liberated her from the shameful servitude of the devil. How could she hope, dear Lord, after all her unworthiness, for such signal graces and extraordinary benefits. Dear Redeemer, you began at my baptism with these favours, because I have been united to you there. I swore an unviolable fidelity to you, and there I contracted an alliance with you which is to last for ever. But, alas, I violated that solemn contract by my infidelities, and, thus separated from you, I am ashamed when I think and am overwhelmed with confusion when I confess that I am a most miserable and unfaithful spouse who merits eternal reprobation ; and yet you, my adorable Jesus, came to me, and, contrary to all my expectations, you said : Behold, I come to be your spouse, and I wish that you will address me in future by that endearing name.

O my divine Saviour, I dare not address you so after all my infidelities to you, because I cannot expect the same friendship nor consequently the same favours which I received before my relapse ; and besides, my dear Lord, how could you unite yourself to me after all my crimes, which should make me unworthy of your slightest consideration. But, my Jesus, when I remember your great mercy, I know I can advance so far, and I will do so. What do you, my God,

[1] Rom. i. 4.

wish me to do to effect this union? I wish you to return to me, to humble yourself as profoundly as you were exalted, to abandon all the idols you have made for yourself, to sigh and weep so loudly that they will reach up to me, and to give an eternal divorce to the world and to all that caused your separation from me. I wish you to do penance, to mortify your flesh and your senses, to cast yourself at the feet of my minister, to tell him all your miseries, and to observe all the rules He will prescribe for your reconciliation with me, because I have appointed him ambassador to arrange the terms of this reconciliation. Do not plead ignorance for your apostacy, and as you never again can be an innocent spouse, be at least a penitent one, whose return is sincere, whose humility is profound, whose heart is penetrated with penitential regret, whose eyes are bathed in tears, and whose body is mortified and subdued. This is what I demand from you, and without it there shall be no union between you and me.

It is just, my Saviour, that this reconciliation should cost me much sorrow and many tears, because I deliberately violated the sanctity of the alliance I contracted with you. Oh, blessed penance, how many benefits and how much comfort have I not found in thee for my past misfortunes! I will embrace this holy and austere penance for the remainder of my life, and it shall be my close companion till my last breath is given, because through it I can be reconciled to my God, and recover all the happiness I lost by my infidelity to Him. O Jesus, my adorable spouse, will I be able to correspond to all the marks of your love for me? Make me faithful to all the graces you wish to grant me, so that I may never again be separated from you. Say to my soul, which yearns to see and to possess you, where have you gone, my well-beloved? I find you in the adorable Eucharist, it is true, but that will not suffice, because my soul longs to see you unveiled and face to face. When shall I rejoice with you where nothing can interrupt our happiness. Come, therefore, Lord Jesus, and take away your spouse from this world into the marriage hall of your love. Come, Lord, come and let me be happy with you for ever. Amen.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON JESUS, THE TRUE WAY TO GOD.

JESUS Himself tells us that "He is the way, the truth, and the life."[1] He is the way we should follow if we wish to reach God and our eternal happiness; and these are the sentiments with which we ought to begin and to advance upon our journey to eternity; and these are the lessons taught us by St. Paul, and even by our Redeemer Himself. This way has been foretold, figured, and promised; and hence the living God said, through His prophet Jeremiah, "I will give my elect one heart and one way, that they may fear me all days, and that it may be well with them and their children after them;"[2] and the prophet Isaias says: "And a path and a way shall be there, and it shall be called the holy way."[3] Christ is the holy way, because He sanctifies all who follow Him. He is the way by His merits and by His example. He is the way by His merits, because all our actions, all our works, and all our exercises of piety must pass through Him and take from Him all the virtue, strength, merit, and sanctity necessary to bring them to God. He is the way by the example He has left us of His poverty, His humility, His mortification, His patience, His sweetness, His charity, and all His other virtues; and whilst practising these virtues we are marching on the pathway of justice which conducts us to God and to eternal glory. Therefore, we will consider in this chapter—1st. That Jesus is the only way that leads to God and to eternal life. 2nd. That He is the narrow way. 3rd. That although this way is narrow, still it is beautiful and crowded with consolations. 4th. The small number of persons on it, and the reason why.

How can we prove that Jesus is the only way that leads to heaven and to God?

When we are young, or when God inspires us to be converted to Him, we are like a person making a journey who finds himself at a junction of many roads, and who knows not which will conduct him to his proposed end. All these roads are near and very like to each other, and still there is only one of them which could lead him safely to where he intends to go. He sees that he must quickly determine by which of them he will go, and hence he is constrained to ask the right road from those who know and understand all about it. We should act in the same way if we do not wish to be deceived in

[1] John, xvi. 6. [2] Jer. xxxii. 39. [3] Isaias, xxxv. 8.

chosing the right road to eternal life, and hence we should beseech the Lord to enlighten and to make known to us the way we ought to go. It is also necessary to learn the road from those who know the only true one, that we may escape travelling at hazard; and hence the prophet Jeremiah says: "Stand ye on the ways, and see and ask for the old path which is the good way, and walk ye on it, and you shall find refreshment for your souls."[1] All the fathers, in conjunction with the gospel, declare that Jesus is the good way and the only way to God; and Christ Himself says: "No man can come to the Father except by me."[2]

Many persons believed in vain that they could come to God by the power of nature and by the light of reason, but all their efforts brought them farther from the only true way; and hence they drifted into intricate and distant wanderings. Others believed that they could find true happiness in the works and ceremonies of the Old Law; but as this way was lonely and destitute of faith in Christ, it served only to make them know their weakness, and the power of concupiscence. Moses, Peter, Paul, and the others, could teach and point out the way, but they are not the way; because Christ says: "No man can come to the Father but by me;" and hence Jesus alone is the way the sinner should seek, and find, and walk upon if he wish to be saved. St. Paul says the same to the Hebrews: "Having therefore, brethren, a confidence in the entering into the holies by the blood of Christ, a new and living way which He hath dedicated for us through the veil, that is His flesh."[3] That is the way He made when He became man, when He died on the cross, and when He entered into heaven; and hence it is the new, the vivifying, and the only way to return to God, when, like the prodigal son, we left our Father's house and went into a strange and far-off country. On this way we will find everything necessary to bring us near to God; because there we will find confidence in our despondency, grace to dispel our weakness, the remission of our sins, and the justification necessary to gain that heaven which stands open for us at the end of our journey.

There are three ways on either of which men walk during life here on earth. 1st. The broad road. 2nd. The road that appears straight, but which leads to perdition. 3rd. The narrow road, which belongs to Christ. These three ways terminate in eternity, which has only two entrances very unlike indeed, because one is the entrance to everlasting delights, and the other to never-ending miseries; and

[1] Jer. vi. 16. [2] John, xiv. 6. [3] Heb. x. 19, 20.

hence our Redeemer says: "Enter ye by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who find it."[1]

The broad way mentioned in the text is no other than self-love and the love of the world, and on this broad road all those travel who follow the maxims of this life and the desires of their hearts, all those who run after perishable goods and after the vain joys and pleasures of the age. This road is the most frequented, and consequently the most crowded; people press for an entrance there, and when they have gained it they strive to outrun those before them; and nearly all mankind walk on this road, and hence those who do not must be very small indeed; and, alas! how terrible this road must appear to the eyes of faith, which is so beautiful and agreeable to human nature. This way is filled with darkness, and those who walk on it do not know what they do or where they go, they cannot see in their blindness the precipices into which they plunge themselves, nor the blessings which they have lost; for, says the wise man: "The way of the wicked is darkness, and they know not where they fall."[2] This road is a wretched and wicked one; all sorts of crime and excesses are rampant on it, and all kinds of injustice, abominations, homicides, vengeance, adultery, blasphemy, impiety, and treason as well; and hence all who travel on this thrice-accursed thoroughfare, though not guilty of all the crimes committed on it, still they are culpable in the sight of God: "For," says the wise man, "the way of the impious is an abomination to the Lord;"[3] and again he says: "Be not delighted in the paths of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men please thee; flee from it, do not pass by it, go aside and forsake it."[4] Everything on this way is dangerous, and hence Solomon exhorts us not to look on it with pleasure, but rather with horror and compassion for those walking on it; to fly from it lest we should be drawn into it, and never be able to escape from it nor to pass it by, because it is strewn with snares, and we might get entangled in them and be lost.

Turn aside from it, says he, because our evil inclination draws us on to follow the crowd; forsake it, says he, because if we stop to look at it we may become pleased with its false attractions, and we may not be able to return when we should desire; and if we could not return, what a terrible destiny and misfortune would be our inheritance.

This broad way is like the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, on

[1] Matt. vii. 13. [2] Prov. v. 19. [3] Prov. xv. 9. [4] Prov. iv. 14, 19.

which one travels from precipice to precipice, and from one abyss still more profound than another. Thieves are found on this road, with the gospel on their lips while they rob souls of their innocence and inflict a thousand mortal wounds on their spiritual existence. All the souls on this way are dead, because they show no signs of life touching their spiritual interests, but their bodies move with speed after the goods of this world and after the pleasures of the senses; and after spending a life of lying and error, they fall at last into the fiery abyss. This road lasts only as long as the life of him who travels on it—for some it is short and for others a little longer, and those who spend their life on it find an accumulation of evil at the end of their journey.

In this world we invariably find those on the narrow road despised, insulted, and made objects of raillery and often of persecution and bad treatment by those on the broad road; but in the next world they will have different opinions, because they will then praise and extol those they formerly despised; they will confess their follies and the fatal error they fell into by remaining on the broad road of iniquity; they will see how blind and foolish they were, and they will find out that their pride, their vain ostentation of their riches, and their insatiable thirst after the pleasures of the senses, served only to make them so unhappy in the future; and then they cannot help seeing the nothingness of all they amassed on this broad road and how all disappeared like the mists of the morning; and hence Solomon says that after death "They shall be troubled with a terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation, saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, those are they whom we had some time in derision and for a parable of reproach; we fools esteemed their life madness and their end without honour; behold how they are numbered among the children of God and their lot is among the saints; therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us; we wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known."[1] How can the wicked who walk on the broad way be happy here, unless they are prepared to make the above reflections hereafter when it will be too late.

Let us make those considerations now in order to turn our desires away from this broad road, and save ourselves from ever entering on

[1] Wisdom, v. 2, 3 4, 5, 6, 7.

it; and let us consider likewise what is this straight way which leads to perdition. There are few truths of religion more calculated to fill us with fear than the language of the wise man, who says: "There is a way which appears straight to men, but its end leads to death;"[1] and although this truth teems with fear, it does not make the alarming impression it should on the soul of man, because we see this straight road crowded with people who live there as tranquil as if there was nothing to be feared on it. This crowd is composed of heretics, schismatics, Mahomedans, pagans, and bad Christians, who walk securely on their own ways, which they regard as straight, but which faith assures us will end in damnation. This is the way of the wise ones of this world, who believe they are just in the sight of God, while, in truth, they are an abomination to Him. These think it will suffice to believe in religion, and that they are not guilty of scandalous crimes and are exempt from certain external vices; and yet Jesus cured the barren fig tree, and ordered the unprofitable servant to be cast into everlasting darkness.

How can Christians believe that they can be saved by performing the external exercises of religion, such as confessing their sins, receiving the holy Eucharist, attending at Mass, hearing sermons, fasting, and giving alms; and yet they have neither the humility nor the love of Jesus in their hearts, for, says St. Paul, these things can be done without charity. This terrible truth caused the most holy to tremble, not only on account of their sins, but on account of their good works, because they knew that all these could be done without the love of God. St. Gregory, Pope, says: "That which we think best calculated to appease our Judge's anger will often irritate him more, as, for instance, when we profane the sacraments instituted to reconcile us to God, and thus we make use of them to render us still more criminal and greater enemies in His sight." Do we not often see persons saying long prayers, and who believe that they are pleasing to God because they feel some sensible consolation in them, while at the same time they are scandalously neglecting some of the principal obligations of their state, such as when fathers and mothers neglect the Christian education of their children and domestics, and magistrates who neglect or abuse their duties. All these and such like pass in the eyes of the world as holy and devout people, because they are often in the church and frequent the sacraments. But Jesus says to them: "Not those who say Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but those who

[1] Prov. xiv. 12.

do the will of my Father, who is in heaven."[1] And even though we should prophesy and work miracles in His name, we will not enter into His kingdom if we do not His will and fulfil all His precepts.

The straight way is partly formed from the broad and narrow ways; it has a good deal of the external appearance of the narrow way and some slight appearance also of the broad way, and people do many things on it like what is done on the narrow way, such as prayers, fasting, alms, and so on; but, like those on the broad way, they are at the same time avaricious, ambitious, full of pride and self-love. Everyone on this straight way makes another way for himself, and each interprets the gospel and makes its application according to his own fashion, according to blind reason and the promptings of his passions; but those people honour God with their lips whilst their hearts are far away from Him; they speak of God and pray to Him, but they do not feel what they say or do. They are very scrupulous observers of the smallest externals of the law, and they neglect mercy, charity, and justice, which are tenfold more important. The holy fathers say that the foolish virgins mentioned in the gospel walked on this straight way, and although they were virgins like the wise ones, and lived in the same community, and were externally like them, they wanted, according to some authors, the oil of humility, and, according to others, that of the love of God. It was on this road also that the bishop mentioned in the Apocalypse walked, who was believed to be living while he was dead in the sight of God, and who was believed to be rich while he was poor and miserable. A blind guide or the violation of an essential precept puts us walking on this straight road, and it often happens that we feel it more difficult to abandon it than to escape from the broad road, because we feel no remorse on the straight road, and because we are often much esteemed, applauded, and even detained there by those who are bound by charity and often by obligation to withdraw us from it.

What is the narrow way?

It is the only way to conduct us to heaven, and it is called the narrow way for many reasons. 1st. Because it keeps reason and the spirit within limits. 2nd. It bridles the imagination. 3rd. It restrains the senses And 4th. It subdues all the passions.

1st. It bridles the spirit and reason, because it will not permit them to escape from the faith which holds them captive. Our intellect is an unquiet faculty, because it wants to see and to compre-

[1] Matt. vii. 16.

hend everything proposed to it, and because it is prone to reject whatever is not clearly demonstrated to it, and hence many persons have strayed away from truth by following their own will, and are generally found on the broad way, whilst those only who submit their reason and their will to faith are generally found on the narrow way.

2nd. The imagination is not allowed to occupy itself with every object presented to it on this way; on the contrary, we must very much mistrust our imagination on this road, because, generally speaking, it creats phantoms of the divinity and of spiritual things under corporal ideas and appearances.

3rd. If we wish to walk on this road we must be continually mortifying the flesh and the senses, doing penance, carrying our crosses, temperate in eating, drinking, and sleeping, veiling the eyes from objects calculated to seduce the soul, regulating our language so as to say nothing contrary to the sanctity of religion or to the charity we owe to our neighbour, avoiding all useless and superfluous words, and so bridling the dominion of the flesh as to keep it always subject and humbled beneath the spirit.

4th. It is called the narrow way, because it binds up all our passions and cupidities, and never permits the Christian to follow them even in the smallest degree, and hence we must continually mortify our passions and renounce our self-will. We must suffer insults and injuries with forbearance; we must fight against the least thoughts of vanity, anger, impurity, or ambition, and become like little children; we must renounce the world and all its perishable riches; we never can again give the least respect to our passions, but all to God and for God; we must not only combat, but we must overcome all our inquietudes, our despondencies, our sadnesses, our vain joys, our fears and timidities, and, in a word, everything emanating from our spoiled nature and corrupt will, and follow Jesus alone and the motions of His grace.

Finally, this way is called narrow, because the only way to walk on it is to follow Jesus, to conform to Him, and to enter into His opinions and sentiments, which we can never do without very strong opposition against the longings of nature; we must entirely destroy the old man and be invested with the new man, which is accomplished only after great difficulty and a long life of practice, by continual vigilance over ourselves, by frequent prayer, repeated mortification, and retirement from the world and from society. How sadly we are mistaken when we believe we can save our souls by a little labour, and by leading a quiet and tranquil life. The way to salvation

essentially bridles the passions, tortures and destroys them, and although this way appears very difficult and painful to human nature, still it is very beautiful throughout, and possesses many and great advantages, and hence the prophet Isaias says: "A path and a way shall be there, and it shall be called the holy way; the unclean shall not pass over it, and this shall be unto you a straight way, so that fools shall not err thereon; no lion shall be there, nor shall any mischievous beast go up by it nor be found there; but they shall walk *there* that shall be delivered."[1]

1st. It is called the holy way, because whoever walks upon it must be sanctified, and must go on acquiring increased sanctity, because everything on it breathes sanctity, conducts to the God of holiness, and to His eternal sanctuary, and because Jesus and His saints walked it, watering it with their tears and with their blood.

2nd. The unclean shall not pass over it; and hence blasphemers, the impious, thieves, adulterers, the perfidious and the cruel, are all excluded from it; but saints and holy persons walk on it, who love and comfort each other in suffering and affliction, all of whom have the same heart and soul, and all move on to the same happy eternity with us.

3rd. It shall be a straight way to the good, because it will chastise the heart, the soul, the actions, and the inclinations, and will guide all straight to God; and because all other ways are misleading, and instead of leading to God diverge from Him.

4th. Fools shall not err thereon—that is, simple souls who have not yet arrived at the sublime truths, and who are so feeble that they cannot walk so quick as the perfect, but because they are faithful and live in simplicity they shall find their strength on this way; and hence Solomon says: "The way of the Lord shall be the strength of the simple."[2]

5th. No lion or mischievous beast shall go up by this way—that is, all who live like beasts shall not be allowed to walk upon it, and none shall be on it but souls disengaged from earthly things, who have conquered their passions, and who have none of the ferocity of the lion, but all the gentleness of the lamb. The devil has no power over souls on this way, but when they depart from it he devours them.

6th. They that shall be delivered shall walk there, that is all those shall walk on the narrow road whom God rescued from the broad road, and from the love of the world; all those whom He delivers by His grace from the slavery of the devil; and all whose

[1] Isaias, xxxv. 8, 9. [2] Prov. x. 29.

captive chains He shall sever. The more we walk on this narrow way the more free we become, and as long as we do not walk on it so long do we continue slaves to our passions.

There are many more advantages to be gained on this narrow road besides those mentioned, every one of which should make it brighter and more beautiful still to the practical Christian It is strewn with consolations every inch from the beginning to the end of the way, and Jesus walks with us there as He did with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. This dear companion of our journey will explain the Sacred Scriptures for us, will clear off all our doubts, will cheer and comfort us, will alleviate and still all our pains, and will gently press us to move on when we attempt to stand. He will take us up and carry us when are weary or fatigued; He will inflame us with His love, nourish us with His body, fortify us with the hopes of the eternal blessings He promised us; and on this way we will find a solid peace, a happy death here and a glorious eternity hereafter; and although this way appears severe to human nature, will not Jesus make it sweet and short with the foregoing blessings?

1st. It will not do to know the advantages to be gained on this narrow way, because we must know how to walk thereon; and hence when a Christian has gained that blessed way, he ought to travel on it, and never rest even for a single moment, because such delays are always dangerous. We must forget everything behind us, and keep a steady eye before us, and we must be always so running in the race as to bear away the prize of a happy eternity; and hence St. Paul says: "Walk towards the day of the Lord, and let not your running be interrupted by a single fall." It is through charity we walk, through it we run, through it we gain the end of our journey, and through it we shall possess the good we are running after, and the stronger our charity is the more our hearts expand, and hence holy David says: "I have run in the way of thy commandments, when thou didist enlarge my heart."[1]

2nd. We must walk on this way and never look behind, because he who puts his hand on the plough and looks back is not worthy of the kingdom of heaven. So, too, when a Christian is converted and returns to the world and his olden habits, he runs the risk of never again gaining the way that leads to the kingdom of God. When we fled from the Sodom of iniquity and renounced the maxims of this world, we should remember, when tempted to return, what befel Lot's wife, whom God so signally punished for looking behind

[1] Psalms, cxviii. 32.

that she never reached the place she intended, nor the city she had left. Such also will be the fate of those who delay on the narrow way; they can never enjoy the pleasures they look after nor return to the virtuous life they abandoned. A similar misfortune befel the Israelites in the desert, who became so disgusted with the manna sent to them by God from heaven, that they returned in heart and affection to Egypt, and, as a consequence, every one of those criminal adults died in the desert and never beheld the promised land.

3rd. We must walk on this narrow way with courage and confidence, never dreading the trials, the difficulties, and the crosses that may happen to us on the way; because despondency is a temptation against piety, and we must have faith and hope to sustain us, because they are the props on which we should rest, and charity will stimulate us to cheerfully advance; and as God gives so many graces to the souls He withdraws from the broad way, we should feel certain of His support to the end of our journey. We should never be discouraged as long as we depend on the support of our Saviour and not on our own. If the Israelites had depended on God, they would not have been cast down at the difficulties before them, nor would they be deprived of the land promised to them; but they depended on their own strength, and forgot the omnipotent hand that rescued them from the power of Pharoah, that gave them a dry passage through the Red Sea, and that overwhelmed that obstinate king and his army with its waters. So, likewise, there are many Christians who imagine that they can overcome their trials and difficulties by their natural power, and they forget all that Jesus enabled them to surmount, and all the miracles He worked in their favour; and because they cannot succeed by their own power, they become despondent and abandon the narrow way that leads to the eternal life they so much desired.

4th. It is also necessary to walk on this narrow way with great circumspection and care, because the road is slippery and the dangers very many, and we must bear in mind as we go along that we carry the blood of Jesus, and the priceless gifts of His graces, in a very fragile vessel; therefore, we must be very careful not to stumble against any impediment on our way, we must watch carefully against the thousand dangers daily cropping up before us, and we must watch particularly over our hearts and our senses, and keep a steady eye on our enemies lest they should come and surprise us; and hence Solomon says: "Let thy eyes look straight on, and thy eyelids go before thy footsteps; make straight the path for thy feet, and turn

not to the right hand nor to the left."[1] This is the circumspection taught to us by the inspired penman, and hence we should not take any complaisancy in those worldly spectacles bordering our pathway and waiting to seduce us from the ways of justice. They are there to invite us to delay on our journey, to rest awhile with them, and to take a part in their vain pleasures and amusements, because they know well that a single glance or a moment's rest could consummate our misery. Holy David is a sad example of this want of circumspection; he looked only once at a female, he yielded to the temptation, fell from grace, abandoned the narrow road, and became an adulterer and a murderer. Therefore, we should never turn to the right or to the left on this most important journey; and hence St. Augustine says: "If we turn to the right we swell out with pride and presumption, and if we turn to the left we fall into effeminacy and idleness;" and, therefore, we must move on without despondency or pride, for these are the two enemies we are to fear and to avoid.

Why are so few persons found on the narrow way?

Nothing could be more surprising than to see the small number of Christians that walk on the narrow road of the gospel, because we know by the light of faith that nothing is so important as salvation, and, consequently, the means to obtain it, and that unless we gain the narrow road here, and walk upon it to the end of our lives, we will be plunged after death into the fiery abyss; and yet experience teaches us that very few enter upon this road which conducts to heaven, and the Son of God endorses all this when He says, "Many are called and few are chosen." We can well say, without investigating the impenetrable decrees of the living God too closely, that the vast majority of Christians do not walk on this narrow way because they do not search for it as they ought, and, consequently, cannot find it, and they cannot find it because they do not love it, and they do not love it because they are attached to the things of this world, which so enslave their hearts to this earth that seldom they trouble themselves about the great affair of salvation, and if they do so it is as badly done as if never tried. This class of persons guide themselves and go on chance, never inquiring where or how will end the life they are leading, and forgetting that any other road must bring them, after death, to an unhappy and miserable eternity. But, alas! they rarely think of those facts, and if they do each makes a way and a plan of life for himself, which is generally regu-

[1] Prov. iv. 25, 26, 27.

lated according to the vices and evil inclinations of the flesh, and not according to the faith and gospel of Christ.

People have a horror of this holy and narrow way, because it obliges them to crucify the flesh and the old man, and to renounce the pleasures and amusements which they love. They can scarcely tolerate those who say that none can be saved except those on the narrow road; they search out pastors who should be able and honest to enlighten them, but who, on the contrary, promise them salvation without doing much violence to human nature; and hence a great number is lost. Those people are discouraged on account of the continual opposition they are bound to make against their inclinations and passions. They cannot believe, on account of their bad faith, that a God of infinite mercy had decreed to give His paradise only on such painful and difficult conditions; and hence they cling to their passions, and walk on the broad way with a false confidence in the goodness and mercy of God. There are others, but they also are very few, who live more scrupulously and externally better regulated, but internally they entertain a thousand attachments which they should forsake, and which keep them from entering on the narrow way—the only way to salvation.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE WAY OF CHRISTIANS.

I adore you, my Jesus, the only true way to the heavenly Jerusalem. Unhappy are those who walk on the broad or straight way, since both lead to perdition. The only way on which I should walk is that marked out for me by your example and instruction, and no matter how painful or difficult it may be to human nature, I should enter upon it, and live and die on it, with your feelings and dispositions always before my eyes and engraved upon my heart. Instead of walking after you, my Saviour, and conforming my life to yours, I followed the strange ways of the children of men, and I continued on the broad way of error, iniquity, and lying. I have been running from one pleasure to another, and from one worldly good to another, and I was always deceived and disappointed.

Puffed up with pride and ambition, I ran after everything calculated to gratify them and exalt myself; I desired worldly goods and the pleasures of the senses, and I sought them with a rabid appetite, and followed wherever my cupidities conducted me. My soul, distracted by a thousand conflicting thoughts and meaningless purposes, presented a variety of charms to me, and my heart, always

empty and perishing, ran after them with unbridled speed, and hence whatever I saw on the broad road appeared beautiful and befitting my tastes and affections; but now I know how much I have fatigued and deceived myself by running after those unsubstantial things. Like a child, I have been pursuing a shadow for a substance, which always kept flying away from me, and hence I could never find anything in the ways of man but evils and afflictions. Show me, dear Jesus, the true and assured way to eternal happiness; because, when considering my own good, I run into the clouded land of impiety, I strayed off from the truthful way, and as I walked along I fell into new faults, and tumbled from one precipice to another; I saw that I was lost in a labyrinth, and could not extricate myself. Grant me grace, O divine Saviour, to deplore my own great blindness, and that of so many others, who rush into the broad way, and who run over it with such thoughtless precipitation, never considering its terrible termination.

O seductive and wicked broad way, beautiful only in appearance! O criminal way, that maketh him who walketh on thee an enemy to God and robs himself of salvation! O my Jesus, what an immense favour you bestow on him whom you rescue from this sinful thoroughfare. You took me by the hand, and, in the abundance of your great mercy, you not only drew me forth from this evil way, but you placed me on the narrow way of the gospel. Eternal thanks to you, my dear Redeemer, for this unspeakable grace and mercy. But, my Saviour, you know that it will not suffice to be on the narrow road, but that it is necessary not to rest on it if I wish to bear away the prize of eternal life. You see, dear Lord, what trifles attract my attention on this way, and which sometimes cause me to abandon it; and you see when I offer violence to my passions, to my sinful desires, and to the other difficulties which assail me, you see that I become alarmed, and that I threaten to abandon it altogether. There are certain spots on this narrow road out of which I can scarcely extricate myself, and there are so many robbers there, watching to steal away the life of my soul and the priceless treasure of your grace, which sustains me, and which carries me so securely along. I can hardly walk this narrow way on account of all the fears, despondencies, trials, and difficulties which assail me every hour, and add to those the heavy weight of my past sins and the efforts of my body to harass and help to overwhelm and weigh down my poor soul.

O my God, as your ways are all mercy and truth, enlarge my

heart and enable me to walk this narrow way with ease and comfort. Grant that your truth may be the light to guide me, lest I should take the straight for the true way. Keep me, dear Lord, so attached to the narrow way that nothing will be able to seduce me from it, because all my passions and inclinations strive to draw me towards the way to perdition. I see and hear multitudes of worldlings crowding the borders of the narrow way, revelling and crying out to me: Come and enjoy our sweet pleasures, come and taste the invigorating wines of Babylon. Ah! my Jesus, you know how often I formerly accepted those invitations, and how often I was seduced to stray in upon the broad way; but your grace, dear Lord, will enable me to hear those invitations for the future with feelings of compassion for those who strive to seduce me, and will make me regard them as so many fables and pleasing dreams, which never can be realized. Shall I ever again be so foolish as to delay with those worldlings, particularly when I see what a long journey I have to travel, and how fast the night is approaching when I cannot walk any more? It is time to quicken my footsteps, and, like a traveller, to hasten to my celestial country; and although the road appears rough and painful, it is in reality bright and beautiful.

If you, my Jesus, be my way and fellow-traveller, the love and hope of the grand rewards promised to me when my journey is over will enable me to travel it cheerfully and with fidelity, and will sweeten all the fatigue and sufferings of the way. Grant that your word may be my comfort on this journey, your sacraments my viaticum, and your cross the prop and support of my weakness and the arms to defend me from my enemies. I know, dear Redeemer, that I cannot enter on your holy way without faith and ardent charity, that I cannot continue there without great humility, and that I cannot make a successful advance on it without great zeal and perserverance. I know also that I will stray away from it if I am not faithful in all things; and if I am not strengthened by hope and specially aided by your grace and mercy, I shall never reach the end of my way; unless you add your grace to my sighs and tears, then I will surely reach my true country, the heavenly Jerusalem, without straying from the narrow way or falling into mortal sin. Amen.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON JESUS, THE LIFE OF CHRISTIANS.

Man abandoned and strayed away from the road which would conduct him to eternal happiness, when he offended God by following the sinful desires of his heart, and when he did so he attached himself to error and lying; and then the doubtful, the uncertain, and the unreal pleased him more than truth, because he lost the life of his soul and died the death of sin; and so much so, that he paid no regard whatsoever to the affair of his salvation. But Jesus, touched with compassion at our misfortunes, became our way to recall us from our wanderings and to conduct us to Himself, and hence He is the truth which liberates us from error and delivers us from the state of death to which sin had subjected us. In the preceding chapter we considered Jesus as our way, and in this we will contemplate Him as our life. He is life in every way, because all things live in Him; He is the word of life by His eternal birth in the bosom of His Father, and in Him and by Him all created things have life. He is the life of the angels in heaven, the life of the sacred humanity to which He is united, and to which He communicates a divine life, and He became the life of mankind by making Himself man; and hence He says: "I am the resurrection and the life, and he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live."[1]

Christ is the life not only of our souls, but of our bodies as well, because He created us, preserves us, and will bring us forth living bodies from the grave on the last day; and hence St. Paul regarded death as a boon, because Jesus was his life, and this is why St. John says: "By this hath the charity of God appeared towards us, because God hath sent His only-begotten Son into this world, that we may live by Him."[2] That is, man was dead in sin and cast off by God before the coming of the Messiah, and the Father, touched with compassion at our fallen state, sent His divine Son upon earth to restore us to life.

Was the state of this world before the coming of Christ a very deplorable and sinful one? No state more frightful and wicked could be conceived. Picture to yourself a vast battlefield after a fierce and bloody contest, where dead bodies, stark and cold, crimsoned and covered with wounds, strew the ground on every side. Such was the condition of mankind before the coming of Christ, and such is the

[1] John, xi. 25. [2] 1 Ep. iv. 9.

state of all those in whom He does not live; and hence St. Paul says to the Ephesians: "And you when you were dead in your offences and sins, wherein in times past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief, in which we also in times past conversed in the desires of our flesh, fulfilling the will of the flesh and of our thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest."[1] Such was the life of man, if we can call one dead in the sight of God living; such was his life when the Son of God came upon earth to give him back the spiritual existence he had lost. He humbled Himself by His hypostatic union to man at His incarnation; He became small, and contracted Himself as if to our dimensions, just as the prophet Eliseus did when he raised the widow's son of Sunam to life. The prophet told his servant to apply a stick which he gave him to the dead child's body; but when this failed the prophet contracted himself, and, prostrate over the dead child, raised him to life.[2] So, too, the Son of God had to come Himself to work the miracle of our spiritual resurrection, and hence St. Augustine says that "Moses came as the envoy of God with a severe and threatening law, to give life to man; but he failed, and Jesus, who was typified by the prophet, had to come to uplift man from his terrible degradation." In order to comprehend this truth we will consider—1st. How Jesus is the life of Christians. 2nd. What Jesus did in order to live in us. 3rd. What we should do that Jesus may become our life. 4th. That the life of the Christian should be the same life which Christ led.

How is Jesus the life of the Christian?

He is so in four ways—1st. Because we ought to live on Him. 2nd. We ought to live in Him. 3rd. We should live for Him. 4th. That He should be our life.

1st. We ought to live on Jesus, because as the body is nourished and lives on bread and other aliments, so too our souls should live by faith and charity on Jesus. We are composed of two substances, one corporal and the other spiritual, and each has its own peculiar support; and hence St. Augustine says: "We have an earthly sustenance to feed the body, and a celestial one to nourish the soul; the earthly food can only give a corporal life, but celestial bread gives a divine and heavenly existence—an existence like to that enjoyed by the angels." St. Paul, so learned in all matters of faith and morals, says that as our bodies and their members are animated

[1] Ephes. ii. 1, 2, 3. [2] 4 Kings, iv. 35.

by the soul, so, too, our souls should be animated by Jesus and live by Him and His holy spirit, "whom He communicates to us by a rich effusion." This happens at our baptism, where Jesus becomes the principle of the new existence we receive there, and where He becomes our chief also; and through this chief and His holy spirit which animates us there, all the members united to Him live in Him and are animated by Him likewise.

We will explain this great truth by the parable in the gospel given to us by Christ Himself, where He likens Himself to the vine tree and us to the branches, and says that as the branches can only produce fruit whilst attached to the vine tree, so, likewise, we cannot produce good works unless we live in Jesus, and draw our spiritual food and existence from Him; because, as the branches receive all their humidity, their sap, and existence from the trunk, so, too, the souls of true Christians must receive life from Jesus Christ, and live in Him; and hence St. Paul says to the Colossians: "We are rooted in Him."[1] And again to the Romans: "We are made partakers of the root and of the fatness of the olive tree."[2] Behold now what the life of the just man is who lives in Christ by a lively faith, and draws from Him all the spiritual goods he possesses. Nothing better could be said on this point than what Christ Himself said: "As the Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father,"[3] "so the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, as we also are one, I in them and Thou in Me."[4] Jesus is in His Father, because from His Father He received life, and all that He has had been communicated to Him by the Father when He begot Him from eternity; so, too, Jesus is in us, as he Himself says, and from Him we receive life, just as He received it from His Father, and hence the life of the just man, or the member of Christ, is the life of God Himself.

As the adorable humanity of the Word made flesh received life from the personality of the Word, to which it was hypostatically united, and as the Word received life from the Father by begetting it from eternity, so, too, a soul sanctified by grace receives life from Jesus dwelling in it and united to it by faith and charity; and hence we are in Him and He in us, as He is in the Father. O my divine Jesus, what a holy and exalted life you give to your members, and yet we must confess with St. Bernard that such is not the life we live, but that of the old man who has possession of all the faculties of our souls and all the powers of our bodies; because he lives in

[1] Coloss. ii. 7. [2] Rom. xi. 17. [3] John, vi. 58. [4] John, xvii. 22, 23.

our hands by the most shameful crimes; in our tongues by our slanders, our calumnies, our pride and vainglory; he lives in our eyes by our curiosity and impurity; and in our hearts by carnal desires and the love of sinful and worldly things; and hence if a man does not live the life of Christ, he must live the life of the "animal man," and must die a miserable death.

2nd. We should live in Jesus because, as His creatures, we live in God, and we have our life, our being, and our motion through His power and immensity; and if we abandon Him, we will fall into nothingness. This visible and terrestrial world is the habitation in which men live, and breathe, and act; so, too, Jesus is the dwelling in which faithful souls produce virtue and good works, and we get into this habitation by justification, or that spiritual creation which draw us from that nothingness to which sin reduced us; and thus we become new creatures in Jesus Christ, and hence St. Paul says: "For we are His workmanship, created in Jesus Christ, in good works which God hath prepared that we should walk in them."[1] In this kingdom the Christian sees everything new and everything changed from what it used to be before he entered it; he hears its inhabitants speaking a language entirely new to him, and expressing thoughts and ideas he never heard before; he breathes an atmosphere all pure and all celestial in this new world; there he is nourished with the bread of angels, and there all the pleasures, glories, and riches of this earth pale into insignificance, and appear as nothing. All that man esteems as great and grand in this world has no existence here, because nothing exists there but God, and truth, and justice.

3rd. We ought to live for Jesus, because the first duty of every Christian is to direct his whole being, all his actions, and every instant of his life to Christ as his God and as his Redeemer, and because He acquired this right by His death and resurrection; and hence St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Jesus died for us in order that those who live may no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose for them;"[2] and again he says to the Romans: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself, for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; therefore, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's."[3] These texts prove that Jesus has a sovereign dominion over us, and therefore He demands with justice that we live for Him alone, and that we shall not perform any act, employ any time, or

[1] Ephes. ii. 10. [2] 2 Cor. v. 15. [3] Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

devote any part of our lives to the service of any creature to please this world or to gratify our passions, but only to please and serve Him. We belong not to ourselves but to Jesus, who purchased us at a great price, and therefore we are His slaves; but we are slaves of a bondage in which we ought to glory, and as a slave can have no will contrary to that of his master, we are obliged to live for Christ alone. We should live before Jesus, our God and master, as a lighted torch, gradually consuming ourselves in His service, for what could be more just and glorious than to die for so good and grand a master.

4th. We ought not only to live on Jesus and for Him, but Jesus should live in us and be our life, because this is the life of the true Christian and the life of Christ Himself. How does Christ live in Christians? He lives in us by His grace and His spirit dwelling in us, by the impression of His mysteries, the application of His merits, the efficacy of the sacraments, and above all by the sacrament of His adorable body. He promised all this through His prophets, because He promised to dwell and to reside in our midst; and He promised the same in the gospel when He said: "My Father, I am in them, I am united to them, and I act and operate in them;" and hence as Christians we can say with St. Paul to the Galatians: "I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me, and that I live now in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself for me."[1] Oh, how beautiful and comforting are those words, and how clearly they declare to the Christian the grand blessings he receives and the sanctity of life he should lead; and hence as Christ lives in us, we must conclude that when we judge, love, desire, act, speak, or suffer, or whatever else we do, is the work of Christ who dwells and acts within us; and, alas! how very few can say that Christ lives in this manner in them. It is those only who are dead to the world, to sin, and to themselves; those who mortify their passions, who regard this world as nothing; those, says St. Bernard, who are being consumed for the interests of Christ, who speak and act by the inspiration of His holy spirit, who embrace with submission all the crosses God is pleased to send them, and who yearn continually after the joys of heaven—it is only those that can truly say that Christ lives in them.

There are two principal reasons why Jesus should live in us. The first is that there is a principle of death in each of us which lives even after we are justified, and this principle continually inclines

[1] Gal. ii. 20.

us to sin, which is the death of the soul; and if another principle—which is Christ—did not dwell in us, to deaden this inclination by His grace, we would become spiritually dead, and from that we would fall into an eternal death.

The second reason is that God wishes to be served by every rational creature in a way befitting the sanctity and grandeur of His being; and since man fell into sin he could never do this, because everything in him was tarnished, and, on account of his corrupt nature, he was worthy only of the anger of God, and it was necessary that Christ should dwell and act within him to enable him to give a worship to God suitable to His majesty; and after this God accepts his works, because, as St. Paul says to the Ephesians: "They are done in God, and with Jesus His Son, who dwells in us,"[1] and "in whom He placed all His affection."[2] We see, from these last words, that nothing pleasing to God comes from us except through Jesus, and that through Him alone we can merit and make satisfaction. A Christian, therefore, who lives in Christ, and in whom Christ dwells, is Christ Himself, because this divine Saviour has so loved him as to invest him with Himself, His life, His sentiments, and His dispositions. And He does this in a manner so significant that when you see a Christian you seem to see Christ, and a faithful copy of Him. You see Him dwelling wherever the Christian dwells, and you see that He will not be separated from him, and that He is continually crying, like Ruth to Noemi, "I cannot live without you, you are my life; wherever thou goest I will go, and where thou shalt dwell I shall dwell; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; the land that shall receive thee dying in the same shall I die, and there will I be buried, and even death shall not separate me from you."[3]

What does Jesus do when He wishes to re-animate a soul dead in sin?

The dead raised to life by Christ was a figure of what He does when restoring to grace a soul dead in sin. He raised from the dead the daughter of the chief of the synagogue, the widow's son of Naim, and Lazarus, brother to Martha and Mary.

When He desired to raise the daughter of the chief of the synagogue from the dead, He ordered flute-players to be brought forth, and a band of persons to make a great noise, and then He entered the chamber of the deceased, and, taking her by the hand, cried out, "Arise, my daughter," and forthwith she arose, and He ordered her

[1] Ephes. iii. 6. [2] Matt. xvii. 5. [3] Ruth, i. 16, 17.

to eat. All this was a figure of what Christ does to the soul of a young person dead in sin. 1st. He removes from her all the inducements which detained her in a state of sin; He separates her from the din and confusion of the world, which prevented her from hearing His voice, and He gives her a dislike for the pleasures, the vain amusements, and false delights of those times, figured by the musical instruments above mentioned. 2nd. He enters the soul by the infusion of His grace and His love, which fill it with comforts much greater than those she received from the love of creatures. 3rd. He takes her, as if by the hand, because if this divine Saviour do not give an assisting hand to such a soul, she never can arise from her sinfulness, nor perform any good for her salvation; but when the hand of God is joined to the hand of man, that is, when the will of man co-operates with the grace of God, the dead soul is re-animated by this grace, and the will of the soul freely works good works. Finally, the Saviour cries out over the dead, to signify that the dead soul must hear His omnipotent voice; then He speaks to it, to make it docile to His teaching, and thus gives it back its lost life, and then the sinner is in a fit state to receive the body of the Lord.

The second person raised by Christ from the dead was the widow's son of Naim. This divine Saviour meets intentionally, and not by chance, the remains of this young man while being borne to the grave; the widowed mother follows them weeping, and Jesus, seeing her distress, was moved to compassion, and, approaching the bier, asked the chief mourners to stand, commanded the deceased to arise, and forthwith he did so, and began to speak, and then Jesus gave him to his mother.

The deceased mentioned in the above narrative is a figure of another kind of sinner, whose passions, after having caused the moral death of his soul, filled it with a thousand maladies, which took such deep root in it from long habit as to bring it to the verge of final impenitence. 1st. Jesus seeks the sinner, by offering him grace before the sinner seeks Him, because he cannot seek God, or make a single move towards heaven, whilst sin holds him in bondage. 2nd. As Christ was moved to compassion through the tears of the widowed mother for her dead son, so too He is moved to compassionate us sinners, and to offer us pardon and salvation through the tears, the fasts, and the prayers of our holy mother the Church, who weeps over the spiritual death of her children as the widow of Naim wept over her dead child; and hence it is that Jesus grants the grace of

conversion to so many sinners. 3rd. As Jesus approached and touched the bier of the widow's son, so too He approaches the sinner, and by an effect of His grace, when everything appears to repulse Him, touches the sinner's heart by afflicting him with some malady, strikes his senses with some sudden catastrophe, or touches his ears with some holy words which rouse him from his sinful slumber and opens a passage for God's grace, which is going to operate his conversion. 4th. When Jesus commands the sinner to arise from his sinful death, He does it so efficaciously that he forthwith abandons his former crimes, separates himself from the occasions of sin, and so detaches himself from earthly things as to seek only the things on high. 5th. As the widow's son began to speak immediately after he was restored to life, so, too, the sinner begins to speak to one of Christ's ministers in the confessional, when he sees the deplorable state of his soul, and when Jesus, through His grace, has raised him from the death of sin. Finally, as Jesus delivered the son to the widowed mother, so, too, He hands over the converted sinner to the Church, who receives him over whom she lately wept to sustain him, and advance him in the holy life to which Jesus raised him.

All that Jesus did to raise Lazarus, who was four days dead and buried, and already corrupting, is a figure of what He does every day to the souls of sinners dead and buried in mortal and inveterate crime. Let us glance at the details of this third resurrection. When Lazarus died at Bethania, Jesus was far away on the duties of His sacred mission; but notwithstanding the fatigues of the journey, He returned, and, standing at the monument where Lazarus was buried, He wept and trembled. He cried out and commanded the stone to be removed from the mouth of the tomb, &c. Martha and Mary were most solicitous for the recovery of their dead brother, which signifies how the prayers and good works of the Church help in the conversion of sinners. Jesus trembled, not because He felt the least difficulty in performing the miracle, but He trembled in His omnipotence over sin, its effects, and its awful consequences, which are sorrow, suffering, and death. He groans in us when faith excites in us a holy fear and salutary dread of our iniquities; and so strong is this fear and dread, that the habit of sin yields to the power of penance and sorrowful regret. Jesus wept, and by His tears merited grace for sinners to weep with effect over the ruin of their innocence and the death of their souls. He comes to the sepulchre, or to the hardened heart of the sinner; it is shut up by a long habit of sin, as if by a huge stone, against the approaches of grace, and all within is

darkness and corruption; but Jesus, as a celestial light, dissipates this darkness, approaches this charnel-house, heals the corruption within it, and imparts life and a stainless resurrection to the soul once dead in sin; He removes the heavy stone when He softens the heart of the sinner by His grace, and when He takes away by His love the heavy load of his sins; He prays, and His prayer is heard, and He makes the sinner pray for the remission of his sins; He cries out, and this cry is a figure of His omnipotent grace, so necessary to change the obdurate heart of the inveterate sinner.

When He commanded Lazarus to arise from the dead, He also ordered that he should be untied, to signify that it will not suffice to be restored to life through the grace of God, but that the sinner must be further untied by the Church, or absolved from his sins by the minister of God. The hands and feet of Lazarus were tied, and his face covered with a piece of linen, to signify that, although the sinner commenced to live, still many things remained to be destroyed in him, and that he must labour to walk in the ways of God, to practise good works, and to remove the covering from his face by making the likeness of God appear on his soul, which he effaced by his bad life and sinful conduct. Every sinner knows well how to cause the spiritual death of his soul, and he knows how powerless he is to re-animate it, and he must know also that it requires an act of omnipotence to restore its life, greater, in a certain sense, than the re-animation of all the dead on the general judgment day. Let us now consider what kind of life the regenerated sinner's life should be, and what kind of life all Christians should lead in this world.

What ought to be the life of a Christian on this earth?

It ought to be the life of Christ Himself, and hence we will review the life of this Word made flesh under three different aspects. 1st. In reference to His Father. 2nd. In regard to Himself. And 3rd. In connection with his neighbour. And, therefore, we should weigh well those three considerations, and strive to learn from them what ought to be our lives here on earth. Jesus lived in this world to glorify His Father by His mysteries and by the sanctity of His life. He led a life of poverty, humility, and penance, and He loved His neighbour, because He delivered Himself to death for him, and because He reconciled him to God and forgave him his sins, and this should be our life with regard to God, ourselves, and our neighbour. Let us consider this life under these three aspects, and we will see what qualities it should have to make it worthy of the Christian name it bears.

What should be the life of the Christian in connection with God, with Christ, and with His mysteries?

The life of a Christian in connection with God should be holy, interior, and fruitful. It ought to be holy, because by holiness of life we honour God in a manner worthy and befitting the perfection and grandeur of His being, and this holiness embraces three conditions. 1st. Separation from everything profane, from everything calculated to dim the lustre of the soul or make it impure in the eyes of God—a separation from the world, from sin, and from all creatures. 2nd. It embraces the consecration of oneself to all that is holy and offered up to God, inasmuch as he is a Christian, to be for ever a vessel or temple consecrated to His honour in the holy service of his Redeemer. This consecration is not made by the blood of oxen or goats, but by the effusion of the spirit, the blood, and the grace of Christ, by the infusion of Christian virtues, and by the participation of the body and blood, the soul and the divinity of Jesus, which we receive in the adorable Eucharist, and which makes our consecration most holy and most perfect. 3rd. This sanctity essentially means a union to the principle of all sanctity, which is no other than God, to whom we are united by charity; and as the God we adore is charity, and as St. John says if we remain in charity we abide in God and God abides in us, and the entire Holy Trinity abides in us as well. O admirable union of man with God, which constitutes his whole earthly peace and happiness, and makes him have no other will than that of God.

2nd. The Christian's life with regard to God ought to be an interior life, because it will not suffice to be holy by the external observance of God's law, but we must be holy in the sight of God, who wishes to be adored in spirit and in truth; and hence St. Paul says to the Ephesians: "To be strengthened by the spirit with might into the inward man,"[1] and "To put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth."[2] God demands the heart as the principal and most noble part of man, He wishes to be loved with the whole heart, and He says we must be converted from the whole heart. All the beauty of the king's daughter is from within, because the knowledge of truth and the light with which God illumines her constitute her beauty, and charity and sanctity make the beauty of her heart. The interior life of the Christian consists also in making a sacrifice to God of all our passions and irregular desires continually cropping up within us, and it consists also in imitating the interior life of Christ and in a continual

[1] Ephes. iii. 16. [2] Ephes. iv. 24.

recollection of our nothingness and dependence on Him, and in acts of adoration which will keep us always in the presence of God. It consists in that contemplation and vigilance which we should exercise upon ourselves, our thoughts, all the motions of our hearts, and all our external senses, in order to avoid dissipation which is the source of countless sins; and it consists likewise in a heart hidden in God with Jesus Christ, because it makes it live in God, unites it to Him, and makes it agreeable in His eyes.

3rd. The life of a Christian with regard to God and to the mysteries of Jesus should be a fruitful life, because Jesus came on earth to give us this life. "I am come," says He, "that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly;"[1] and hence a life of starts and intervals will not suffice for God. We must not believe that God will be satisfied with a few hurried moments given in His service, nor in prayers superficially made, nor in Masses frequently heard without devotion, nor in benedictions often received and with very little Christian piety. The adorable Trinity demand from us what we owe them. The Father, as the beginning and the end of our existence, demands that all our actions shall be directed to Him, and that we shall live and act for His glory alone. Jesus, our model, requires that our lives shall be conformable to His, and that we shall express His virtues, His sentiments, and His dispositions in our conduct. The Holy Ghost demands that we will follow His lights and inspirations in all things, and that we will do nothing but what He suggests; and all the divine attributes demand all our homage and adoration. All the mysteries of Jesus should be visible in us, and each should produce in us some of the fruits peculiar to it; and the sacraments, so often received, should fill us with an abundant sanctity; and hence St. Paul says to the Philippians: "Let us satiate ourselves with the fruits of justice;"[2] and to the Ephesians he says: "Be ye filled with the Holy Ghost;"[3] and again: "Be ye filled with all the fulness of God."[4] Surely, this is not the life of the generality of mankind. We believe that we do too much for God, and not half enough for the world, to which we sacrifice all, to which we devote ourselves without reserve, and whose maxims we follow so recklessly.

What should be the life of a Christian with regard to himself?

As the life of Christ was one of poverty, humility, and penance, so, also, should our life be. 1st. We ought to lead a mortified and a penitential life, and not only to be conformable to Jesus, but to

[1] John, x. 10. [2] Philip. i. 11. [3] Ephes. v. 18. [4] Ephes. iii. 19.

deaden the concupiscence of the flesh within us, and destroy the body of sin we carry about us, because it is impossible to overcome the desires of the flesh unless we crucify it by an austere life, and because we are obliged, as Christians, to this mortification to carry our cross and to renounce ourselves. The obligation of leading a penitential life is very binding on us sinners, because there is no other way to obtain the remission of our sins, and to recover the grace we lost. As it was the love of pleasure that estranged us from God, so we must come back to Him through sorrow and suffering; as we became enemies to God through the bad use we made of our bodies and of creatures, it is befitting to offer those bodies to Him as holy and living sacrifices; as we employed our members in the commission of crime, we should devote them now to works of justice; and as we abused creatures, it is just to suffer the privation of them by fasting, alms, tears, retirement, and penance.

2nd. We must live an humble life if we expect to combat successfully our unfortunate inclination for everything calculated to exalt ourselves and flatter our vanity, because we were lost through pride, and Jesus wants to save us by humility; and hence if we wish to be truly humble, we must become like little children, always taking the last place, suffering injuries and contempt with patience, and willing to be treated as the last of mankind, bearing the opprobrium of men without complaint or the loss of our charity, always having a low opinion of ourselves, never seeking the esteem or praises of this world, and trying to live in it hidden and unknown. This is the kind of life we should lead if we wish to be conformable to Jesus, who annihilated Himself for love of us, and who taught us to love humiliation by His own example.

3rd. We should also live a life of poverty, and renounce in heart and affection all the goods and riches of this world. We should not even desire to be rich, but should be content with what is necessary for our state. We must retrench all superfluities, and give them to the poor; we must avoid costly garments, expensive furniture, and rich equipages, and live in modesty, simplicity, and in accordance with the rules of the gospel. The rich and powerful should manifest in their external life that they are the children of the God of poverty, by using the things of this world as if they used them not; and those who are poor should feel happy in being the followers of Christ; they should not desire a better position than that in which God placed them; they should not envy those who are rich, nor should they pretend to be rich, but to live content with what they have to

eat and wear. We should love poverty, humility, and mortification, because we ought to love our own good, and those three bring us to God, our only good. But, alas! our passions are the greatest obstacle to the possession of this sovereign good, and hence we ought to be poor, humble, and mortified, as they are the best able to keep the enemies of our salvation in subjection. We should be always fighting against our passions, and the best way to do so is to cut off everything calculated to foster or strengthen them, such as worldly pleasures, riches, and all objects of pride and vanity, because these are the sources of our unhappiness and the cause why we lose God, our only and sovereign good.

What should the life of a Christian be in connection with his neighbour?

All we owe our neighbour, says St. Paul, is contained in one word, "love." And how are we to love? 1st. As we love ourselves, by wishing him to possess the same blessings we possess, or desire to possess, such as virtue, grace, and salvation; and we should strive to procure those blessings for him by our charitable instructions and corrections, by our good example, and by all means in our power; and not only should we procure the spiritual and eternal happiness of our neighbour by our prayers and zeal, but we should look after his temporal comforts also, by administering to his wants, even from our necessaries, which we can do by living more economically. This law of charity is more binding still, because our Lord commands us to love our neighbour as He loved us; but He sacrificed His honour, His earthly comforts, and His life for our salvation, and, therefore, we should be at least disposed to sacrifice ourselves and all we have for the salvation of our neighbour. This is the doctrine taught by our Redeemer, and by St. John in his epistles—a doctrine little known and still less practised, because we see every day how difficult people find it to love their enemies, to do good to those who injure them, or to make a single effort to gain them to Jesus.

2nd. This charity to our neighbour binds us never to injure or do him any harm in his person, his goods or property; never to cause him to fall into sin, or to scandalize him by word or action, and to practise patience, meekness, humility, and compassion to all men; and hence St. Paul says to the Colossians: "Put ye on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, and patience, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another if any have a complaint against another; even as

the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also."[1] Charity embraces all the names mentioned in the above text; it takes in the whole life of the Christian, and makes a single body of them all, and although they are composed of many and different members, they have but one heart, one spirit, and one soul. Charity makes all who practise it one brotherhood, having the same father, partaking the same spiritual blessings, having the same hope, and abiding in the Church as in the house of their father, mutually compassionating and comforting each other, all living in harmony, without envy, disputes, quarrels, or recriminations, studying to please and help each other, and all loving each other as God loves them, because all are one in Jesus Christ, without distinction of Greek or Jew, slave or freedman. Such should be the life of Christians here on earth in connection with their neighbour, and yet how little it is known and practised. This, however, is the kind of life Jesus wished to establish when He commanded us to love one another as He loved us, and that we should be one, as He and His Father are one, and because He gave us His spirit, and commanded us to nourish ourselves with His adorable body in order to form this spiritual, this divine and ineffable union.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE LIFE OF CHRISTIANS.

O eternal Word of the eternal Father, only Son of the living God, life hidden in God from eternity, and made known in the plenitude of time by your birth in the chaste womb of the most Holy Mary, and through all the mysteries you operated; you are the veritable and eternal life, the life of the soul and body, and the principle of all created life. When the Father begot you from eternity, He communicated to you the fulness of His life, and in your incarnation you communicated to human nature the divine life you received from your Father, in your Father, and for your Father. After you gave this life to human nature, you infused it into us, and made us partakers of it by uniting yourself to us by your grace and your sacraments; and you did so that we might live with you, through you, in you, and for you, just as you live with and for your Father.

Oh, how grand and exalted is the life of the justified Christian soul, because it originated in the bosom of the Father, passed on to the Son, and from Him it came into us. But, alas! when I reflect on myself, can I say that I live in Jesus Christ; can I say that my soul

[1] Coloss. iii. 12, 13.

has her life from Him as my body has its existence from the food that nourishes it; do I judge and desire, do I love, act, speak, and suffer for Him? O my Lord Jesus, I know that you can be in me only when I am dead to myself, to the world, and to sin—dead to myself by renouncing all my human ideas, all the desires of my selfish will, and everything sensual and effeminate within me; dead to the world by living in retirement, in the contempt of all its goods and pleasures, and by a strong and ardent love to separate myself from everything passing in it, in order to be united to my sovereign good; dead to sin by a true and sincere conversion and a continual mortification of my senses and passions. I confess, beloved Redeemer, that I lived up to this according to the flesh only; I lead a life all carnal, earthly, pagan, and following only the vanity of my thoughts and the illusions of my passions. I appear to live in the eyes of the world while I may be dead before you, because I possess a mere external justice, a justice in the eyes of man. Grant, dear Lord, that your life may destroy all my lives, so unconformable to your designs, that I may do so through the abundance of your blessings, through Christian holiness, the hope of eternal happiness, and the character of child of God which I carry. O Jesus my Saviour, live in me by the presence of your holy spirit, by the communication of your mysteries, by the sweetness of your grace, by the application of your merits, by the effusion of your love, by a participation in your virtues and divine dispositions; so that I can say with St. Paul, "Not I, but thou that livest in me."

Oh, how holy and exalted is the life of Jesus in the Christian soul, and the life of the Christian soul in Jesus! O my Saviour and my God, grant me this life, draw me away from the shades of death, and heal the corruption which sin has caused in me. I wish, my Saviour, to complete the death of this expiring cupidity, which is still a living principle of death within me, and I desire that whatever is mortal in me may be absorbed by your eternal and divine life. As you, my Jesus, are the resurrection and the life, apply yourself to my soul as the prophet Eliseus did to the dead body of the child, and breathe a new and living life into it; because if you spread your spirit over it, it will truly live; but make it so living, my Jesus, that it will die no more, nor ever again be separated from you in time or eternity. Grant that I may live in you as the bread and nourishment of my soul, as the element I should breathe, and as the end to which I ought to direct my actions, my life, and my death. But, O living life of my soul, you are also the life of my body, because I received it from you; you

preserved me by your mercy, even when I deserved to be lost by my crimes. May I live in future to glorify you by my penances and by the continual sacrifice of my life. It belongs to you, and you alone know how long I shall possess it; and hence I await in peace and submission your protecting hand in that last hour when I hope you will take me away from this wretched exile, this land of death, and introduce me into the land of the living. I hope, through your great mercy, to find this glorious, immortal, and eternal life, after you shall have commanded my reunited ashes and bleached bones to come forth from the grave, clothed with incorruption and immortality. Then I shall live by you and with you in the bosom of your Father, where no power can ever take away my life from me.

Alas, when will that happy time come when I can say: Behold I am going to live and never more to die; this happy hour which should be the constant object of all the thoughts and desires of the child of God, which will consummate his union with his God by making him immortal in his immortality, holy in his sanctity, happy in his happiness, glorious in his glory, and living in his eternal life. Destroy, dear Lord, this tenement of clay, burst the bonds of this body of death, liberate me from this exile; my heart and soul bound with joy for this living God, and they desire nothing in heaven or earth but Him alone. O my Jesus, and my Saviour, Son of the living and true God, you alone are my true life, and I always hoped that death would be a new life and a great gain to me, because it will emancipate me from this mortality within me, and from the tyranny of the old man who inclines me to sin despite all my efforts. Come, therefore, my Jesus, come for me, for you are the divine and eternal life of my soul and my body. Amen.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON JESUS, THE ETERNAL AND IMMUTABLE TRUTH.

JESUS CHRIST, the Word of God, the only-begotten Son of the eternal Father, He who received all things in time and eternity from His Father, is the eternal and immutable truth. 1st. He is the supreme and universal light and reason of all created spirits, and in Him and through Him they know the truth, because He alone has a perfect knowledge of it, and communicates as much of it as He pleases to men and angels. As the Word of God, He is the supreme reason of all intelligent creatures, and hence St. John says that "He

enlightens every man that cometh into the world;"[1] and again the same evangelist says that this Word made flesh appeared upon this earth "full of grace and truth."[2] All religion and all the truths it teaches are contained in Him, because He is the fulness and the end of all. He came amongst men to point out truths unknown to them from the beginning of the world; and hence He said to Pilate: "For this I came into the world, that I should give testimony of the truth;"[3] and He was condemned to die on the cross for speaking and teaching this truth.

2nd. Jesus is the truth, the reality, and the substance of all the figures of the Old Law; and hence St. Paul said to the Hebrews: "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come—not the very image of the things—by the self-same sacrifices which they offer continually every year, can never make the comers thereunto perfect;"[4] and again he says to the Colossians: "Which are a shadow of things to come, but the body *is* Christ's."[5] Christ, therefore, is the body and the accomplishment of those figures, the truth and the fulfilment of the promises made to men, and the truth and development of all the prophecies. All the Old Law has an admirable reference and connection with Jesus, just as the shadow has to the body. The law appeared—1st. As a shadow, and Jesus, the Sun of Justice, appeared in the fulness of time and dissipated all shadows; and hence St. John says: "For the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."[6] It would be necessary to run over the entire of the Old Testament to fully demonstrate how all the figures in it were accomplished in Jesus, but as we cannot do so in this small space, we will produce a few of the most convincing texts to establish the fact that all were fulfilled in Him.

Adam's sleep in paradise, when his wife was formed on one of his ribs, was a figure of Christ dead, and, as it were, sleeping on the cross, and also of His Church formed from the blood andwater flowing from His pierced side. The tree of life was a figure of Him and of the sacrament of His body and blood, which gives eternal life to all who worthily partake of it. The spring found in this garden of delights, and from which flowed four rivers, was a figure of Jesus, the fountain of all grace flowing over the four quarters of the globe. Abel, murdered by his brother Cain was a figure of Christ crucified by His countrymen, who were His brothers according to the flesh;

[1] John, i. 9. [2] John, i. 14. [3] John, xviii. 37.
[4] Heb. x. 1. [5] Coloss. ii. 17. [6] John, i. 17.

but the blood of Abel, which cried up to heaven for vengeance, was not like the blood of Jesus, says St. Paul, "which cried out for grace and pardon for us."

Noah is a figure of Jesus in many ways. In his name, which signifies repose; because all can find in Jesus their repose, their peace, and their consolation. The building of the ark, and the warning given to men of the deluge which was coming to engulf them, was a figure of Christ building His Church, preaching to mankind, and threatening them with endless punishments if they did not believe His word and be converted. The eight persons saved in the ark from the ravages of the deluge was a figure of the few to be saved on the last day, and those must belong to the ark of the Church. Noah, whilst sleeping from the effects of the wine cultivated by his own hand, was a figure, as David, Isaias, and the gospel state, of Jesus dead on the cross after having drank gall and vinegar presented to Him from the synagogue, and after having been overwhelmed with opprobrium by the people He planted as a vine and cultured with such care. Noah exposed in an indecent state, mocked at by one of his sons, and honoured and respected by the others, was a figure of Jesus naked on the cross, mocked at by some of His people, respected and adored by others, regarded as a folly and scandal by some, and by others, as St. Paul says, "as the power and wisdom of God." Noah's awaking, casting off, and cursing his wicked son, Cham, in the person of *his* son, Canaan, whom he subjected to his brothers, was a figure of Christ risen from the dead, reproving the Jews, cutting them off from His Church, and subjugating them to the Gentiles, to whom He gave His graces. Jesus Christ, mediator between God and man, the sign of the alliance, or rather the alliance itself, which God made with man, is the truth, the realized rainbow fixed in the heavens by God as a sign of His alliance with man. When the heavens are darkened with clouds, God sees this rainbow, and His anger is appeased; so, too, when He is enraged with man, and looks upon Jesus, His Son, He suspends His vengeance, because He sees Him mediating for sinful man. The person of Melchisedech, his priesthood and his sacrifice, are figures of the eternal birth, the priesthood, and the sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus offered to God under the appearance of bread and wine. Abraham, the father of a numerous family, was a figure of Christ, who is the father of all Christians. Isaac, by his obedience and sacrifice, was a figure of Christ's obedience to His Father's commands when He made himself obedient to death and to the sacrifice of the cross.

Jacob, who went forth from his father's house in search of a spouse, whom he soon found and wedded after years of toil, and who became father of the twelve tribes of Israel, was a figure of Jesus, who descended from heaven to be espoused to His Church, and who was, according to the spirit, the prince and father of the twelve apostles whom Jesus dispersed through the world to announce His gospel and teach mankind to adore and serve the true God.

When the patriarch Joseph foretold His future greatness under the figure of his brothers' sheaves of corn adoring his, he became forthwith the object of their envy and was sold by them to strangers. He was accused in Egypt by the wife of Putiphar, who strove to seduce him to crime, and as a proof of his virtue he left a portion of his cloak in the hands of his intended seductress. He was cast into prison where he foretold the liberation and exaltation of one of Pharoah's imprisoned officers and the execution of another. But when his virtue and innocence became known to Pharoah, he was liberated and raised to the highest dignity in the kingdom of Egypt, and became the saviour of Egypt and of the surrounding nations by having stored up food sufficient for all; and when he had fed and loaded his brothers with presents, he made known to them who he was. This holy patriarch was a figure of Jesus, the well-beloved Son of His Father, who was sold by Judas and delivered up to the Gentiles, who condemned Him to death; but He came forth glorious from the tomb, made Himself known to the Jews, who were His brothers according to the flesh, and asked them to hear the Church and be converted from their infidelities.

Moses, who was saved from the death inflicted upon all the newly-born male children of Israel, and who was reared up by the Egyptians, was a figure of Jesus saved from the carnage of the holy innocents by His flight into Egypt. Moses, who was destined by God to be the liberator of His people, and was ordered, after spending some time in solitude, to go into Egypt and deliver the captive Israelites from the tyranny of Pharoah, was also a figure of Christ sent upon this earth to deliver mankind from the still more shameful slavery of the devil. Moses, who proved his divine mission by many miracles, and destroyed Pharoah and his army in the waters of the Red Sea, is a figure, too, of Jesus, who proved before the Jews, by miracles worked by His own power, that He was the true Messiah, the real Son of God, sent by His Father to liberate them, and who by virtue of His cross would bury all their sins in the waters of baptism.

Jesus became man in the chaste womb of His Virgin Mother,

and, better still, He dwells in the adorable Eucharist as the eternal and immutable God, and as the reality of the never-consumed though burning bush of Mount Horeb. Jesus put to death by the Jews, and whose blood was shed upon the cross for the salvation of mankind, was the reality of the paschal lamb with whose blood the Jews traced a cross on their doorposts, as a sign to the destroying angel to pass them over. Jesus, the living bread, descended from heaven for the life of the world, is the reality of the manna which God caused to fall in the desert for the food of His people. Jesus who was elevated on the cross, who delivered us from the tyranny of the devil, and who through the faith we have in Him healed the wounds inflicted on our souls by the infernal serpent, is the reality of the brazen serpent raised up in the desert to cure all those bitten by the fiery serpent. The rock struck by the rod of Moses, and which became a fountain of water to extinguish the thirst of the Israelites in the desert, was a figure of Jesus, in whose wounds we find the fountain of grace whose living waters cool the ardour of our passions and the heats of concupiscence. Jesus, our sovereign priest, chosen by God for that function, filled with the unction and the plenitude of the Holy Ghost, immolating Himself for the salvation of man, who entered once into heaven after offering His victim, invested with glory and immortality, shining with celestial light and sanctity, and praying without ceasing to His Father for mankind, whom He carries in His heart and soul, is the reality of Aaron, the high priest, called by God, consecrated with the oil of sanctity, clothed in gorgeous vestments, carrying the plate of gold upon his forehead, and the names of the twelve tribes upon his breast, entering into the holy of holies once a year with the blood of the immolated victim to pray for all the people. Jesus, mediator between God and man, raised upon the cross between the living and dead, where He offers up His prayers and supplications to His Father to stay the fury of His anger, is the truth of that Aaron who placed himself between the living and the dead whom the fire had consumed, and appeased the anger of God irritated against His people. Jesus conducted into the desert with the load of our sins upon Him, and living there amongst beasts, is the verification of the emissary goat annually sent with the sins of the people into the desert to be devoured by wild beasts. The two sparrows offered to God, one of which was immolated over the living waters, and the other set free after being dyed with the blood of the sacrificed, was a figure of Christ immolated for man, whose nature He had taken upon Him, and who liberated them by His death.

The tabernacle, the ark of alliance, the propitiatory, the golden candlestick, the loaves of propitiation, the pillar of cloud which conducted the Israelites in the desert, and all other sacrifices, were so many figures that the coming Messiah would be no other than Jesus. Joshua, Gedeon, Samson, Booz, David, Solomon and the temple which he built, were figures of Jesus, who is the reality of all that preceded Him; all point to Him, all find their accomplishment in Him, and all express some one of His mysteries or His virtues; and hence He is the end, the centre, the perfection, and the consummation of the law. All the ceremonies, all the sacrifices, and all the precepts of the Old Law conduct us to Jesus, because in Him all the figures are verified and all the prophecies fulfilled.

Moses foretold Him, because our Saviour said in the gospel that it was of him he wrote when he said that a child would be born from a second Eve who would crush the serpent's head. Abraham foretold Him when he said that in Him all nations would be blessed. Jesus, the established chief and king of His Church, was the reality of Him whom Jacob foretold would spring from the Jewish race to guide the people of Israel, who was the expected of nations and the desired of peoples. Balaam predicted the mystery of His birth; and He Himself is the prophet whom God promised would be born in the midst of His people, who was to be like other men, and whom the people would hear. David often foretold Him in his psalms. He speaks of His temporal and eternal birth in his second psalm, that He would be established King of Sion, and that nations were to be His inheritance; and in his 109th psalm, he speaks of His grandeur and His priesthood; and in his 21st and 68th psalms he foretold His passion and most of the circumstances connected with it at considerable length. The prophet Isaias speaks of Him as the infant whom a virgin was to bring forth, and whose name was to be Emmanuel, or God with us. He foretold Him as the admirable one, the great counsellor, the strong one, God the Father of future ages, and the prince of peace; and He is mentioned in the 11th, 42nd, 49th, 53rd chapters, and many other places, by the same prophet Isaias. He was predicted by the prophets Aggeus, Zachary, and Malachy, and was foretold, in some circumstances of His life or death, through the entire of the Old Testament; and hence St. Augustine says: "All that is hidden in them is no other than the hidden Jesus, and all that is discovered in them is Jesus revealed; and as all the Scriptures refer to Jesus, it is for Him we ought to search in them." We will now consider four points in this chapter.

1st. What truths Jesus taught to men, and how He taught them. 2nd. What do we owe to truth. 3rd. The injustice we do to it. 4th. The benefits we gain by loving and following it.

What truths did Christ teach?

Being the plenitude of all things, He essentially contained all natural and supernatural truths. No Christian or pagan philosopher could comprehend the smallest truth of nature but as Jesus, the Word, who was the cause of their reason, enlightened them. It was this Word that spoke to them, although they knew Him not, and it was He that made known to them His divine attributes and His invisible divinity, through the consideration of His visible creatures; and all the discoveries made by man in the order of nature were made known to them by this divine Word, and happy would it be for them if they directed their knowledge to adore and love God as they ought.

Jesus taught all the supernatural truths also, either by enlightening men Himself, and giving them faith in mysteries and truths high above their reason, or through His Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, and who, as He promised His apostles, was to teach all truth. He taught these truths especially in the gospel, where He spoke clearly to men and taught them truths proportioned to their wants, and which were necessary to draw them from ignorance and error. He became man to teach us the mysteries and truths hidden from the beginning of the world, and we should study the divine books where truth is concealed in words and sometimes under a veil, as Jesus is hidden in the adorable Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine, for our spiritual food.

Jesus teaches the truths of faith in the Church and by means of the Church, because it is the depository and the guardian of the Sacred Scriptures, and the only society on earth so privileged; and hence St. Paul calls it "the house of God," because in this house alone the pastors of Jesus, who is the great Father of the Christian family, distributes the bread of truth, after having first nourished themselves with it. St. Augustine says that we cannot find truth anywhere except in this house of unity and charity; and if certain sects still have some truths, they have them from the Church, which they took away when they separated from her. Oh, how grateful we should be to Jesus, who enlightened us with those truths through Himself and through His Church. He has spoken His truth to all without exception, but all do not believe and follow it, because they prefer falsehood and error to it; and He has proportioned it to the

weak and to the strong, and to persons of all states and conditions, all of whom could know it if they desired to seek it with zeal. He taught it with the greatest simplicity, and spoke it without fear to the great, and by the unction of His grace He poured it into the hearts of those who received it in order to make them love it.

What do we owe to truth?

The first duty of a wise man is to love truth with the same affection as he loves Christ Himself, because He is the eternal and immutable truth, the sovereign good of souls, and the bread that nourishes, sustains, and fortifies us against heresies, falsehood, error, and the wicked maxims of this world. We cannot love God if we do not love His truth, because He is truth as well as charity; and hence St. Paul says: "Charity rejoices in truth;" that is, when we love God we glory in a knowledge of His truth, even when it is most opposed to our self-love, and costs us some trouble to practise it, because truth is the buckler of the soul, and saves her from cupidity. The love of truth unites us to God and to our neighbour, because true friendship springs from truth; and hence St. Augustine says to his converted friends: How could you be my friends when you were not with the lovers of truth, which is the foundation and the comfort of true friendship, and therefore if we love truth we ought to seek it.

2nd. As we lost truth by our sins, we must seek it as the precious treasure of our souls; and hence our Redeemer says that neither fallen man nor rebellious angels adhered to it. Ignorance, error, deceit, and falsehood set our souls mad, and although a desire not to be deceived still remains in our hearts, we are often deceived, because we do not look with sufficient care after the truth; and hence it will cause us some trouble, because much prayer, meditation, retirement, and holy repose are necessary to make it out, and St. Augustine adds that a love of truth leads us to a holy repose in order to know and to contemplate it. It is necessary to call and knock at the door in order to receive this bread of truth; we must divest ourselves of self-will, we must mistrust our own lights, and read the Sacred Scriptures with faith and respect, and, above all, we must consult the Church, the depository of this truth.

3rd. When we have found the truth, we ought to regulate our hearts, our souls, our actions, and our entire conduct according to what it teaches; because we will be judged hereafter according to truth, and not according to the opinions and feelings of ignorant and worldly-minded men; and hence holy David says: "God will judge

all men according to truth." Therefore, we should always have this truth before our minds lest we should take our own thoughts, reflections, and imaginations for it, and we ought to examine if what we think, desire, or wish to do is conformable to it; and hence St. Paul says to the Ephesians: "But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him who is the head, *even* Christ."[1]

4th. We are bound to give evidence of the truth by our words, our actions, and, if necessary, by our death. By our word, in never saying anything contrary to truth, never using equivocations, dissimulations, or falsehood in any shape; because sincerity is the character of the true child of God, and because lying is one of those sins most troublesome to society; and hence the wise man says that lies kill the soul, and the devil is the father of them. The liar imitates his father, the devil, and St. John says in his Apocalypse, that God will cast liars and hypocrites into the fiery lake. A good man will never have recourse to lies or dissimulation, because truth is always in his heart and on his lips; he is invested with it as with a buckler, and in simplicity he puts all his confidence. We must give evidence of truth in our actions by conforming ourselves to all it teaches, and, like Christ, to suffer death rather than renounce it, for if we renounce it we deny Christ Himself; and if the ordinary faithful are obliged to witness the truth, surely pastors, preachers, and doctors are much more strictly obliged, because they are the depositories of it, and from them the people are to learn it.

When the high priest of the Old Law entered the holy of holies, he always carried the words "truth" and "doctrine" hanging on his breast, and hence St. Gregory says this is the truth and the divine doctrine Jesus taught to men, and which priests and pastors of the New Law should always cherish in their hearts, in the temple, and everywhere their ministrations call them; and, therefore, this holy truth should be to them as a light to illumine their own and their people's journey to eternity. Their state obliges them "to rightly handle the word of God, admonishing with modesty those that resist the truth, if, peradventure, God may give them repentance to know the truth."[2] What greater glory could pastor receive than to know that truth was loved and practised by his people? What nobler use could he make of his ministry than to establish the reign of truth in the souls of men, discussing its merits without deceit, disguise, or self-interest, administering it with the wisdom and the prudence of men who desire to have it loved and practised, and not with that bitter and indiscreet

[1] Ephes. iv. 15. [2] 2 Tim. ii. 15, 25.

zeal so calculated to make it contemptible? Nothing merits so much honour as truth, and those do it much harm who make it disrespected by the morose manner and bitter words they use when speaking it; and hence pastors should use their authority to make it prepossessing, because, says St. Paul, "We can do nothing against the truth but for the truth."[1] What an awful crime those commit who use their character and authority to destroy it, to enfeeble it, to prevent it being taught, or to injure or persecute those who teach it. It is true, says the wise man, there is a time to be silent and a time to speak, when, as St. James says, "We should be ready to hear, and slow to speak,"[2] and it is true also that we should not cast pearls to swine lest they should trample them under foot, and tear those who cast these treasures to them. Christian prudence should guide us how and to whom we ought to speak the truth, because it is never allowable to oppose its progress.

What are the injuries we do to truth, and what are the sins opposed to it?

1st. We injure truth when we contradict it, and hence Ecclesiasticus says: "Do not contradict truth in any way;"[3] and yet we do contradict it through malice or ignorance, or because it is opposed to our passions, or to the wicked lives we lead, or because it combats the false principles we entertain. We speak against it through malice when we know it is truth, and yet, through a criminal obstinacy which has pride as its principle, we still contradict it; we speak against it through ignorance when we become alarmed at hearing a true proposition, unknown to us before, and which we regard and oppose as a novelty, because, through ignorance and pride, we did not give it an investigation sufficiently careful. This is the ignorance from which springs that false zeal which we see in those who persecute others for preaching truths bitter to self-love and corrupt nature; and the Pharisees were of this class, and hence could not bear Christ, who spoke truths which they did not know, and which destroyed the false ideas they held and taught about piety. And, finally, we contradict truth because it fights against our passions and condemns our bad conduct. It is surprising how strongly people are opposed to this humiliating and crucifying truth, while they believe without difficulty in one God, the incarnation of the divine Word, and in a trinity of persons; and yet the same God teaches both, and all are necessary for salvation. We are all naturally inclined for the acquisition of truth, and hence St. Augustine says: "No

[1] 2 Cor. xiii. 8. [2] James, i. 19. [3] Ecclus. iv. 30.

one wishes to be deceived, and when he is deceived he wishes that what he loves, or what he believes or does, would be the truth." Although these reasons appear sufficiently strong to induce us to love and embrace all truth, still the generality of mankind will not bear the truths taught by Christ, such as the obligation to renounce ourselves, to do penance, to fly from the pleasures of the senses, to suffer injuries and insults with patience, to love our enemies, to despise riches and honours, and to fly from the world and its maxims. When a person lives badly, he cannot bear the truths which censure his criminal actions, and St. John says: "For everyone that doth evil hateth the light and cometh not to the light that his works may not be reproved."[1] We wish to live in the unjust and tranquil possession of things we love, and this is the reason we do not want to see the light which condemns our inordinate love, because sinners love and are pleased with the darkness; but truth troubles their false peace, and then they fall into despondency and sadness.

2nd. We do an injury to truth when we are ashamed of it, when we hold it captive against justice through self-interest or cowardice, and when we speak it so obscurely and with such a colouring as will suit the passions of those to whom we speak. What a misfortune for those who conceal or disguise this holy truth, and what an evil to those from whom it is hidden or to whom it is only half discovered; and yet this crime is very common amongst those who speak to the rich and great ones of this world, because truth dare not appear to those without fear and always in a strange costume. When we seek our own interests or earthly goods and honours, we fall away from truth with great facility, and hence Solomon says: "Such a man abandons truth for a morsel of bread;"[2] but he who fears not, who hopes for nothing from this world, and whose heart is always bent on Christ and his salvation, he will always be firm and immovable in the knowledge and love which Christ hath given him.

3rd. We do an injury to truth when we prefer the opinions of isolated authors which are not received or approved by the Church, but who wish people to adhere to their decisions as oracles of truth, and as if coming from the lips of Christ and from the voice of the Church; but he who seeks the truth always prefers what he believes nearest to it, and in order to pay it the honour it deserves, he rejects all that which departs from it. Jesus desires to conduct men to the truth on the authority of the Church, and not by human reasonings which flatter the corruption of man's heart and pander to his passions;

[1] John, iii. 20. [2] Prov. xxviii. 21.

and hence St. Paul says to the Colossians: "Beware lest any man cheat you by philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ."[1] As if he said that the examples of Christ and of His word in the gospel should be the only rule of our conduct, because they are the only certain means to guide us in the affair of salvation, the great affair we should be most careful to secure.

4th. We do an injury to truth when we clothe it in falsehood, duplicity, dissimulation, and equivocation; and this is the kind of language which deceived our first parents, which is cursed by God, and comes from the spirit of darkness; but sincerity is the character of true Christians and children of God, and hence our Redeemer says: "Behold Nathanael, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."[2] Pride and self-interest make us lie, because we generally excuse our defects by falsehood, and when we state a falsehood we sustain it by another to escape the shame of being considered a liar. The trader uses lies to deceive the simple and the ignorant, and disguise and artifice are the characteristic prudence of the worldling, who speaks, promises, and offers his services entirely different from his thoughts.

5th. Hypocrisy is another sin very injurious to truth, because, by the external acts of piety we perform, we intend to give a higher opinion of our faith than truth permits. We also offend against truth when, in the society of worldlings, we approve of what they approve, and censure what they censure, by our appearance, our words or our actions, while in our hearts we think according to truth, and we act in that way through what is called courtesy, and through fear of offending the pride or sensibilities of those to whom we speak.

6th. Calumny is not only a sin against charity, but it is a crime most injurious to truth, because, contrary to the dictates of conscience, contrary to the knowledge which God, who is the truth, gives the calumniator of truth, he gives himself up to the wicked promptings of his heart, and gives the person he calumniates an idea or character contrary to truth.

7th. Rash judgments also are a species of sin contrary to truth, because, through them we judge or condemn our neighbour without reason, or upon false or slight reasons.

8th. We sin against truth when we regard the things of this world, its goods, its pleasures, its grandeur and affections, and its

[1] Coloss. ii. 8. [2] John, i. 47.

poverty and disgraces, in any other light than truth views them, because everything, good and evil, vice and virtue, must be judged according to truth, and truth judges those things in a very different way from what they appear to our passions and inordinate desires. How wise our judgments would be, and how much honour we would confer on truth, if we judged everything appearing to our minds and senses according to this equitable standard. Therefore, we must not regard as trifling the injuries done to truth, because God punishes those who do so very severely; and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "Wrath and indignation to them that are contentious, and who obey not the truth but give credit to iniquity."[1] In what does this indignation consist, and in what form does God make it appear? God permits those who culpably give faith to falsehood to be easily seduced into error, and they perish in the end; and hence St. Paul says to the Thessalonians: "They have not received the love of truth that they might be saved, and, therefore, God shall send them the operation of error to believe by lying."[2] Men reject the truth, and truth abandons them to the spirit of error and falsehood, and they are never happy afterwards but when they possess what flatters their criminal passions; and hence St. Paul says to Timothy: "For there shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires they will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned into fables."[3] Such are the terrible and just judgments inflicted by God on those who do not love the truth. He permits those men to respect the vapourings of unauthorized teachers, and to adopt the peculiar instruction of rash and imprudent authors without examining them. Those people find all their delight in the fables of a romance, or in the fictitious history of a comedy, or in an eloquent discourse, although it should be entirely profane; and thus they lose all taste for the gospel simplicity and for the truths Jesus teaches, and they openly combat and resist those truths; but God does not treat true Christians in this manner, nor even sinners who sincerely desire to come to Him; and hence, as they do not wish to be deceived, Ecclesiasticus says that "God will give them the way to justice, and will appoint the lot of truth to them."[4] They know that they are deceived by following their obscured spirit, and hence they sincerely seek truth intending to follow it, when they find it, during the rest of their lives; and this truth will sustain them in this exile every time they suffer, and it will be their joy and conso-

[1] Rom. ii. 8. [2] 2 Thess. ii. 10. [3] 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4. [4] Ecclus. xvii. 20.

lation hereafter in heaven. But this will not be the happy lot of those who rejected the truth during life, because when it will be too late, they will clearly see it on the last day, and they will strive to embrace it, but it will fly from them; and they will be cast into exterior darkness. Truth will enlighten them on that day, in order to condemn them and make them comprehend their misfortune, and, overwhelmed with despair, they will exclaim, says the wise man, "We were wanderers from the truth." What a misfortune to know this truth now and not to practise it, and to see that it will condemn us hereafter as our judge, whereas it would be our justification now if we followed its teachings. God will make use of this truth on the last day to overwhelm and confound all those who rejected and abandoned it during life, because it will then appear as a victorious queen coming forth from the mouth of Jesus to judge mankind; and hence St. John says: "The word I have spoken, the same shall judge him on the last day;"[1] and this word, after condemning men by its light will be their everlasting executioner in hell, and will live in their memory to reproach them for their folly and their errors. Could anything be more just and reasonable than to fear those chastisements now, in order to escape them in the future; and what better way to act now than to make this holy truth our friend, and to embrace and faithfully practise it as the rule of our lives and conduct?

What benefits do we gain by attaching ourselves to this truth?

As we learned the injuries we do to truth, and the punishments to be inflicted for neglecting it, it is just to know the good it procures for those who love and practise it. One of the principal advantages to be gained by following the truth is, that it liberates the soul from the servitude into which vanity, illusion, and the false ideas of worldly things had plunged her. As truth is the great good of man's heart and soul, and as the knowledge and the love of it constitute all his happiness, he can be emancipated from the slavery of his errors only when he knows and loves it; because the possession of it delivers him from the dominion of the prince of darkness, and from the ignorance in which he lived when he did not know it. It delivers him likewise from scruples, and makes him walk with simplicity in the holy ways of justice; it calms his fears by establishing him in peace; and hence our Redeemer says: "If you continue in my word, you shall be my disciples, and you shall know the truth, and it will make you free."[2] The second advantage which truth procures for the soul that knows and loves it, is that it becomes a

[1] John, xii. 48. [2] John, viii. 31, 32.

buckler around the soul to protect her against the temptations of her enemies, and to ward of all the false opinions and errors raised up against the faith and moral laws of Christ and His Church; and hence holy David says: "His truth shall compass thee with a shield, and thou shalt not be afraid of the terrors of the night."[1] The doctors of our holy Church have always used this buckler to combat error in every age, and not the logic of human philosophy. They always wielded this truth in its simplicity against the originators of error, and always came forth victorious after vanquishing their enemies and confounding them with the power and splendour of truth. Therefore, if we wish not to be seduced and deceived by external objects, and by the discourses of men who speak nothing but follies and proclaim their foolish dreams, we should never be divested of this buckler of truth, and should continually use it in our battles for eternal life.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE ETERNAL AND IMMUTABLE LIFE.

I adore you, my Saviour Jesus Christ, life eternal and immutable. All natural and supernatural truths are contained in you, the word and wisdom of the Father, as in their source, and no one knows or can ever know this fact except in you and through you, who enlightens all men. You are the supreme reason of all created intellects, and you are that universal and independent spirit that rules over all others, because they have their being, their life, and their light from you. O adorable Word made flesh, you are the reality of all the figures of the Old Law, and in you all the promises and prophecies of that law are fulfilled; you made manifest all the mysteries hidden under the law, because the sacrifices and the ceremonies of the temple, and all the Sacred Scriptures speak only of you. Everywhere I find you hidden or revealed in those Sacred Scriptures, because it has pleased the Father that the plenitude of truth should dwell in you as in its source.

O incarnate Truth, you appeared on earth to enlighten and make men know the truth and to be happy, and hence you sent down your holy spirit on them, and established doctors to teach it to them. You confided the sacred deposit of your worship to your spouse the Church, to communicate it to her children in order to save them from error and to protect them against heretics and false prophets. I know, O Lord, through your great mercy alone that I have been deceived by

[1] Psalms, xc. 5.

attaching myself to worldly opinions which appeared good to me, because they flattered my passions and seduced me with a false peace. It is time, my divine Jesus, to regulate my heart and soul and all my conduct according to the maxims of your holy truth, and not according to the ideas, the customs, and the rules of this wicked world. I seek everywhere in vain for anything true, and solid, and outside of you, my adorable Saviour. All is vanity and falsehood, because your truth alone makes me see the nothingness, the falsity, and the illusions of the goods, the pleasures, and of everything which this world esteems. O divine Truth of my heart and soul, never abandon me. O Truth ignored and rejected by a world that follows false ideas only, what vast injury it has done itself by despising you and neglecting to consult you on everything. O Truth confirmed by the blood of Jesus and His martyrs, when will you be the only object of my soul, when will I be able to contemplate you in a holy repose, and when will my heart receive you unopposed.

My state must be miserable indeed, since truth only pleases me when it shines brightly upon me; but it becomes hard and insupportable when it condemns my worldly desires, my passions, and my attachment to creatures and the indulgence of my senses. I love it when it enlightens me, and when it proposes to put my heart in order I feel great pain and affliction, and all misfortune and injustice comes from my passions, which cannot bear to be controlled. Grant me, dear Lord, a great love for all the truths you have taught, and an eternal horror for all the sins opposed to it, particularly lies, rash judgment, calumnies, dissimulations, and hypocrisies. Encompass me with your truth as with a buckler of defence against the enemies striving to seduce me, and grant me grace never more to hide it, and always to declare it to all who wish to hear it; because it is just to confess it at all times and never to deny it, and, if necessary, to suffer and die in its defence.

I am certain that it will honour me if I honour it, that it will fight for me if I fight for it, and that if I defend it, it will defend me on that day when you, my Jesus, will come to judge mankind by its holy standard. The whole human family has fallen into a deep and terrible degradation, by running after and prostrating itself before the idols of error and falsehood. They sacrifice all things to these, and only a small number pay homage to the God of Truth, and fewer still dare to speak of it, much less to practise it; and scarcely are there any who rule their conduct by its teachings. Grant, O Lord, that your holy truth may triumph in all places over

these errors and false principles which corrupt the heart and soul of so many millions, and efface from my heart and soul all the false principles which the goods, the pleasures, and the other evils of this world have impressed upon them. Be you my light and my guide, my Saviour, that I may never again be put astray by the spirit of darkness, who, in order to deceive me, transforms himself into an angel of light, and conceals his poisons under the appearance of truth.

But, alas! where shall I find this peace which will make my happiness in this world? There are so many different sects, so many straggling societies, all of whom believe they possess this grand truth; but, my divine Saviour, I know that in your infallible Church alone this holy truth can be found, because you confided it to her only, and because you made her its only support, its immovable pillar, its faithful depository, and infallible and only interpreter. She carries this venerable truth in her Sacred Scriptures and in her traditions, as in a tabernacle from which she takes it to teach it to mankind, through the aid of that holy spirit who animates and guides her with infallible security in all her decisions. Never suffer me, dear Jesus, to depart from this hallowed house of truth and unity; give us doctors to teach it always with wisdom, zeal, love, and devotion. Grant that they may inspire the faithful to love and practise it by their holy example, and to teach it in a manner befitting its grandeur and the honour it should everywhere receive. Open the eyes of all who persecute it because it cannot pander to their passions. Grant, through your holy grace, that all men will love it, because all then will have the same feelings and the same language, and all will be consummated hereafter into one eternal union with you, my Jesus, who art the source and centre of all truth. Amen.

CHAPTER XX.

ON JESUS, THE DOCTOR OF TRUTH.

JESUS is not only the truth, but the apostle, the preacher, and the doctor of truth; and hence the prophet Isaias says of Him: "And thy eyes shall see thy teacher, and thy ears shall hear the word admonishing thee behind thy back, this is the way, walk ye in it, and go not aside neither to the right hand nor to the left."[1] This is the Word made flesh, whom men have seen and heard preaching here on earth, and who taught the truth as long as He lived. He gave proof of this by His death on the cross, and He gives testimony of it now

[1] Isaias, xxx. 20, 21.

from heaven, where He lives seated at the right hand of His Father, teaching it to our souls by enlightening them with its light, and instructing our hearts by making them love it; and hence St. Matthew says: "For one is your master, Christ."[1] He is the interior master, because as the Word, the light, and the eternal truth, He enlightens the spirit, dissipates its darkness, and makes it renounce its errors; and as our Saviour and Liberator He speaks to the heart by His spirit, and by His grace He inspires it with a love of the doctrine He teaches.

Preachers speak their instructions and doctors give their writings to the ears and to the eyes of the body; but the omnipotent voice of Jesus opens the ears of the soul and makes the deafest to hear; because it is not he who plants nor he who waters that performs this great miracle, but it is Christ alone who has power over the hearts and the souls of men that gives the increase to the seeds planted by His ministers; and hence St. Augustine says: "Men make great noise in vain about the ears of the body by their discourses, but all their eloquence is useless unless Christ speaks to the heart by His grace and gives hearing to the ears;" and, therefore, it follows that Christ is the only doctor of our hearts and souls. Although there are many priests, still Christ's is the only priesthood; so, too, there is only one doctor and only one true doctrine, that of Jesus, which all teachers and doctors should know and teach. Those doctors and preachers are the chief disciples of this doctrine, because they announce it on the authority and in the name of Christ; they are His ambassadors, and hence they should speak in His name, and as His mouthpiece they ought to teach only what they learned in His school and in His written and unwritten word, all of which is confirmed and explained by the Holy Spirit through the councils and traditions of His infallible Church.

We will now consider who those doctors and teachers are whom Christ has given to His Church, and who so succeed each other as to form only one doctor and one master; and although St. Paul says to the Ephesians that "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors,"[2] still they are all only one, holding the same opinions, and speaking the same truth for the visible instruction of men, just as Christ Himself did while here on earth; and although they labour visibly "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, that henceforth we be no more

[1] Matt. xxiii. 10. [2] Ephes. iv. 11.

children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,"[1] still all the doctors and pastors of the Church employ the same holy doctrine which they learned from Christ to teach a new people and a new body, to form itself from Christ, and so much so that those who hear them hear Christ Himself, because He speaks through their mouths.

Christ, our only master, instructs us not only through His ministers, but—1st. By the example of His virtues and that of all His saints, who followed His example and walked in His footsteps. All the great men and women whose lives have been a continual retreat, mortification, penance, detachment, and renunciation of this world, and all the edifying examples left to us in the Church by so many holy fathers, religious, and simple faithful, are so many living lessons given to us by Christ to teach us how to live.

2nd. Jesus instructs us through the trials and afflictions He is pleased to send us, in order to detach us from creatures and make us respect and adore His omnipotence, to fear His justice, and, above all, to fly to His mercy, in which we can find true consolation under the visitations which His divine hand is pleased to send us.

3rd. Our divine Master instructs through His creatures, and by means of everything happening in this world, and Solomon, speaking of this uncreated wisdom, says: "Wisdom preacheth abroad and uttereth her voice in the streets, and at the head of the multitude she crieth out; in the entrance of the gates of the city she uttereth her words,"[2] and makes us see everywhere the power, the wisdom, the mercy, and the justice of God. His invisible grandeur is made visible to us through the grand diversity of His creatures, and through the marvellous order of the universe, in which every object preaches something of Him, and makes us regard this world as an unspeakable miracle of grandeur, where we see shining out everywhere the ineffable mechanism of that supreme architect who formed it by His single word. But, alas! all these do not speak to those who hear only through the senses and corrupted reason, because Jesus, our great doctor and only master, has to unite His voice and grace to teach us what creatures, the events of life, and the general and particular care He takes of mankind, teach us.

4th. Jesus teaches us through His Church, which is the sole depository of His doctrine and interpreter of His faith and of the sense of the Sacred Scriptures; and hence we should consult her in all our doubts and difficulties, if we do not wish to be regarded, as

[1] Ephes. xii. 14. [2] Prov. i. 20, 21.

Christ said, "as the heathen and the publican;" and we ought to submit with humility to her decisions on all occasions, and receive them as coming from the Holy Ghost, who guides and governs her.

5th. Jesus instructs us through the Holy Scriptures, which contain the chief portion of the doctrines He announced to mankind, and this is the doctrine we will consider in this chapter, where we will see—1st. What is the gospel. 2nd. That it ought to be the rule of our lives, if we wish to live true Christians. 3rd. The admirable effects this doctrine produces in those who practise it. 4th. That it is necessary to read this gospel, and how we should read it.

What is the gospel and what does it contain?

The word gospel signifies good news, because the good news of the incarnation of the Word, the birth of the Saviour, the coming of the expected Messiah, the desired of four thousand years, is announced in it. What more happy and comforting news could we hear than that recorded by St. Luke, who said that "The Son of God was sent to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captive, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward."[1] This is the reason it is called the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of God's grace, of salvation, of peace, and of the glory of Jesus Christ. The apostles gave all these names to the gospel, and each of them contains some admirable instruction, and all of them give us an exalted idea of what this gospel is.

It is called the "gospel of the kingdom,"[2] because it announces unequivocally what the kingdom of heaven is, and because it promises this kingdom to us, and bids us hope to gain it; and it is called the kingdom also, because it is the law of the kingdom of Christ, and by means of this law Jesus established His reign in the hearts of mankind. 2nd. It is called the "gospel of the grace of God,"[3] because it announces the great good God has done to the world when He gave His only-begotten Son for the salvation of those who would believe in Him, and because it makes known the power and efficacy of God's grace, which makes us freely love the sovereign good and His law, which we formerly despised and neglected. 3rd. It is called the "gospel of salvation,"[4] because it teaches that we cannot be saved except through Christ, and because it defines the rules we ought to follow and the means we ought to adopt to gain this salvation. 4th. It is called the "gospel of peace,"[5] because

[1] Luke, iv. 18, 19. [2] Matt. iv. 23. [3] Acts, xx. 24.
[4] Ephes. i. 13. [5] Ephes. vi. 15.

it announces man's reconciliation to God, because it teaches us to live in peace with our neighbour, and that when we begin to practise it, we will also begin to taste internally the sweets of that peace promised to all in heaven.

5th. It is called the "gospel of Christ's glory,"[1] because it makes known the mysteries of the incarnate Son of God, His divinity, His grandeur, the power of His operations, and the majesty and splendour of His most glorious name, which fills the heavens and the earth, and even hell, where it must be respected. All these names which have been given to the gospel assure us that it contains the mysteries of Christ, the miracles He performed, the life He led on earth, and the precepts and counsels He delivered to man. This doctrine teaches how we ought to regulate our hearts, our souls, and our actions—that is, what we ought to believe, to hope for, and to love, and what we should do to serve God in a manner befitting the dignity of His being, because all our duties are contained in those three things, and because these are all Christ received from His Father and has taught us; and hence He says: "The things I heard from Him, the same I speak to you;"[2] and again, "My doctrine is not mine, but His who sent me."[3]

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were represented, according to the holy fathers, by the four animals which St. John saw before the throne of God. The first was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third like the face of a man, and the fourth like a flying eagle. Each had six wings, was full of eyes, and all were saying day and night, "Holy, holy, holy is the omnipotent God!" The lion represents the victories which Jesus, the lion of the fold of Juda, gained over the world, the devil, and the flesh. The calf, which was destined for sacrifice in the Old Law, represents the sacrifice of the sufferings and the death of Christ. The likeness of a man's face represents the human nature of Christ while on earth; and the flying eagle represents the mysteries of the divine Word in the bosom of His Father, and His infinite grandeur described for us by St. John. The wings on those mystic animals point out the promptitude of the evangelists to spread the doctrine of Christ according to the grace and the movement of the Holy Ghost. The eyes with which those animals were filled represent how the gospel can penetrate and discover whatever is most hidden, and, as St. Paul says to the Hebrews, how "the divine Word is living and efficacious, and more piercing than a two-edged sword, and reaching into the divisions of the soul and the spirit."[4] These animals crying

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 4. [2] John, viii. 26. [3] John, vii. 16. [4] Heb. iv. 12.

out day and night, "Holy, holy, holy is the omnipotent God," represents that no book could make known so well as the gospel the infinite holiness of God, and how great the sanctity of Christians should be; and hence if we read the gospel with the respect and attention it merits, we will find that those two points are an abridgment of all we can find in it.

Ought we live according to the rules and maxims which the gospel of Christ teaches?

If we wish to live as true Christians, we should live according to the gospel for three reasons—1st. Because it is the rule of a true Christian life. 2nd. Because we find true piety and wisdom in it. 3rd. Because we shall be judged according to its standard, and all who will not obey it will be punished with eternal torments. We will explain those three reasons.

1st. The gospel is the rule of the Christian religion, and of all who profess Christianity. We all admire the holy lives and great sanctity of those men and women, who voluntarily embraced a life of penance, and buried themselves in solitude as in a tomb. All these orders have a code of rules which every member in the community is bound to observe. All Christians are religious in a certain sense, and Christianity is the religious order of Christ, because He is the head and founder of it, and the gospel is the book of rules. If Christians of the present age were holy enough to live like the early Christians, who had but one heart and one soul, and all things in common, Christianity would be one immense religious order, where peace, concord, the spirit of poverty, obedience, conjugal chastity, and virginity would reign, and it would be the admiration of infidel nations. But, alas! this early state of Christianity no longer exists; it ceased since the spread of religion, and the only relic we find of it is in the religious communities of the present day. We are religious still in spite of this spiritual decay, because we made our vows at baptism from which we never can receive a dispensation; and we made them in the presence of the priest who received them, and before God's holy altar and His angels.

When we entered this holy order, we received the gospel as our rule book to teach us how to live as true Christians; and if we do not observe the rules of this book, we are Christians only in name, because the neglect of the rules causes all the evils of an order. What is the cause of all the crime we see triumphant to-day in this world; why so many wars and divisions in families; why are men's passions so excessive and unbridled; what has caused that tide of sin

which sweeps over and inundates the world; and why is virtue despised, and piety the object of worldly raillery; do not all arise from the contempt which the millions have for the gospel truths?

What is the cause of all these relaxations in morality which we see every day amongst regulars and seculars, amongst ecclesiastics as well as amongst the people?

All are caused through neglect of the gospel rule, for as long as we follow this holy rule our lives will be holy also; we will become the admiration of those who differ from us in religion, and our ministers will be really and truly the light of the world, the salt of the earth, and the model of all Christian virtues. The lives of the early Christians were models of labour, mortification, zeal, and poverty; they lived detached from the world; they despised its pomp, its costly furniture and grand equipages; they were charitable to the poor, and impoverished themselves to relieve and make them happy. But as soon as they began to neglect the rule of the gospel, they began also to relax in love and devotion to God, their neighbour, and their salvation; and hence the Church had to introduce numerous binding canons to call them back to their first fervour and to the strict observance of their gospel rule. We regard those irregularities with sorrow, and yet we follow the children of the world, who have no other rule of conduct but their self-will and corrupt reason, their passions, human wisdom, the custom of the times, and the lax opinions and casuistry of particular doctors. A false rule could never be the rule of our conduct, because the rule of the Christian should be immutable, unequivocal, inflexible, true, and certain, and giving such maxims to the heart and soul that no one can be in danger of going astray. These maxims are found in the gospel and nowhere else.

1st. The human intellect or reason is mere darkness when unaided by evangelical faith, because those who were guided by them dwindled down into foolish reasonings, which led them into such frightful excesses that they abandoned themselves to all kinds of crime; and those who do not plunge down so deep construct systems of morality for themselves entirely opposed to the gospel, and conformable to their self-love and to human philosophy, and not in accordance with the doctrine of Christ.

2nd. Our passions, any more than reason, cannot be our rule of life, because they only seek their own interests and whatever may foster them. How could those passions be our rule of life which Christ commands us to fight against, to mortify, and keep in con-

tinual subjection? The inclination of those passions is to fill our souls with darkness, and, in the end, to blind them; and how could a man thus blinded walk in the pathways of justice; would he not rather walk in the way of his self and corrupt will and right over the precipice?

3rd. Custom could not make our rule of life, because that is the rule worldlings follow, and because such a rule is contrary to the precept of St. Paul. It is true that some customs are good in law because they are not opposed to the gospel, but every custom opposed to the gospel must be rejected, because no custom can prescribe against it, and hence every custom opposed to this axiom must be regarded as false. Christ Himself condemned the customs and false maxims of morality and discipline introduced by the Pharisees, contrary to faith and morals; and whenever the saints observed customs or habits entering into the Christian community, which were contrary to the morality taught by Christ and the gospel, they immediately condemned them. What maxims more horrible could be conceived than those made and punctually followed out by people of the world, such as that no injury should be allowed to pass unavenged, that every insult should receive a retort, to venture one's life for a passing satisfaction and other such trifling causes; and hence those worldlings say that a man is good for nothing, and cannot appear in society as a person of refinement without the above absurd magnanimity. How reprehensible these foolish rules are when compared with those which Jesus came on earth to teach us. He wants us to place all our glory in bearing insults with meekness, in granting pardon to our enemies, and never to do them an injury, but, on the contrary, to do good to those who harm us, to bless those who curse us, and to serve those who speak evil of us. But some persons will say, perhaps, that there are many authors and doctors less rigid than we appear to be, on whose interpretation of evangelical law they can safely act.

4th. Now this is a rule not less dangerous than those we have just mentioned, because according to this casuistry many persons make up a false conscience, and swear with mental reservations and equivocations; they make usurious contracts, attend illicit sports and spectacles, and even palliate injustice, in order to retain some perishable goods not their own; and in doing those things they say they follow the opinions of many learned doctors who do not condemn them, but who, on the contrary, allow them. If we take the gospel in our hand, and compare the act we are going to perform with that standard, and if

we find that our action is not conformable to its laws, why, I ask, should we do it? We will now examine if those plays and spectacles, those operas, comedies, and games on which we lose so much time and squander so much wealth, are conformable to what Christ commands in the gospel, where He tells us to renounce ourselves, to carry our cross every day, to mortify ourselves, to walk always in the narrow way, to give all superfluities to the poor, to do penance, and to bridle our passions. This is the law we are bound to consult and to follow, and not the longings of nature nor the corrupt opinions of men, and this is the advice given by the prophet Isaias to the faithful servants of God who were exposed to the seductions of false prophets: "And when they shall say to you, seek of pythons and of diviners, who mutter in their enchantments, should not the people seek their God for the living of the dead, to the law rather and to testimony, and if they speak not according to this word they shall not have the morning light."[1] They will be encompassed with impenetrable darkness and cannot find their way out of their wanderings, and we see that a Christian is not less bound to consult the gospel than the Jews were to consult the Old Law.

But what is the law of the gospel, and do we know its precepts? Alas! how few reflect on this question, and yet it is the abridgment of Christ's law and the rule of life for all Christians, kings, bishops, priests, the great and the lowly, the poor and the rich, and the young and the old.

The first and great precepts which are an abridgment of all the others are—1st. To love God with our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole mind, and our neighbour as ourselves. 2nd. It is a precept to renounce our self-love and to fight against our passions. 3rd. To carry our cross humbly every day of our lives. 4th. To conform ourselves to Christ, to imitate the example of His virtues, and to enter into His feelings. 5th. To suffer injuries, affronts, and humiliations with patience. 6th. To renounce in heart and affection all we possess, and to be always poor in spirit. 7th. It is a precept to love our enemies, to pray for them, and to entertain no feelings of vengeance against them. 8th. It is a precept to seek chiefly, and above all things, the salvation of our souls. 9th. Each of us should struggle to be perfect in his state, and should make efforts to advance every day in virtue. 10th. We should become like children, and seek to humble rather than to exalt ourselves. 11th. We should continually watch over ourselves, and pray not only with our

[1] Isaias, viii. 19, 20.

lips, but also from our hearts. 12th. We ought to be disposed, if required, to give our life for Christ and our neighbour. 13th. We are bound never to blush on account of the gospel of Christ, but to confess it openly on all occasions. 14th. We are obliged to lend without usury, and never to ask a thing below the lowest price or to demand a price above the ordinary value. 15th. To give alms according to our abilities, and according to the wants of the poor. 16th. Not to contract an alliance with God and the world at the same time, because we cannot serve two masters. 17th. Not to love the world, or anything in it, because the love of the Father is not in him in whom such love dominates. 18th. God commands the rich to give in charities the superfluities of their state, to be humble in the midst of their wealth, and never to put their confidence or consolation in uncertain riches, because Jesus curses all who do so. 19th. It is forbidden to love the pleasures and vain joys of this world, because Jesus has pronounced a malediction on all who do so. 20th. It is commanded not to be the cause of scandal to your neighbour, because Christ has cursed the world on account of its scandals. 21st. We are commanded to fly from the occasions of sin, because the gospel says if our hand or our eye be the cause of scandal, cut off the one and pluck out the other; and hence if anything in our lives or actions is the cause of scandal to others, we must forthwith get rid of it. 22nd. We are commanded to direct all our actions to God as our last end, because St. Paul says that whatsoever we do we ought to do it for the glory of God and in the name of Jesus. 23rd. We are bound to use the things of this world as if using them not, and always to eat, and drink, and sleep in moderation, and only when necessary. 24th. We are bound to walk on the narrow way, and to do violence to ourselves, and even the gospel counsels are precepts touching the inclinations of our hearts, because we ought to be prepared to abandon all things if God should command us to do so.

This is the rule of life we are bound to follow at all times and in all places, and we never can receive a dispensation from the smallest portion of it. We can be sometimes dispensed from the precepts of the Church, but we never can from the divine precepts. If we hold on to the rule of the gospel, and consult it on all occasions, all our difficulties would soon be decided; but we must say with St. Paul that "all do not obey the gospel,"[1] and pastors could say with Isaias, "who hath believed our report;"[2] still we must live according to the

[1] Romans, x. 16. [2] Isaias, liii. 1.

rules of the gospel, because we find true wisdom and solid piety in it.

The second rule which proves that we ought to live according to the gospel is that we will seek in vain for piety and wisdom in every book outside it. 1st. The gospel strikes at the root of every vice and fights against the passions of men, and we must do likewise if we wish to acquire wisdom. 2nd. The gospel teaches and sustains all the virtues, and through it we can discover the fallacy of human virtue, and see hypocrisy condemned and false justice destroyed. We learn from the gospel how to investigate the good and the bad, and how to separate good works and virtues from those which appear to be so, and with this divine sword we can penetrate into the innermost recesses of the human heart, and discover there what is solid and what is not. 3rd. The gospel teaches that true piety and that worship of God which is perfectly free and distinct from all pagan and Judaical superstition, because we learn in it to adore God in spirit and in truth, and to perform all our acts of religion in the spirit of a lively faith. The gospel is not content with an external piety, because it must have one from the heart as well; it will not ignore the more important duties of religion for the practise of certain external devotions, nor will it allow us to honour God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him. 4th. The gospel establishes true piety, because it establishes true peace and repose in every society; and hence when families and communities are ruled and live in union according to the gospel, we invariably find each in his own place, and discharging with order and fidelity the duties of his vocation without the least envy or disunion, and we are never surprised to see any more than an unsubstantial piety in those who profess but who do not follow the gospel; and all this must follow as long as we are separated from evangelical simplicity. Each of those people performs a devotion according to his own taste, his whim, his imagination or humour. One follows his own inclinations, his own will, and neglects humility, charity, silence, retirement, self-abnegation, and the hidden life commanded by the gospel; and yet these are the only maxims to create within us that piety which is worthy of the God we adore.

The third reason which obliges us to live according to the gospel is that we must judge ourselves by it if we wish to live holy lives, because this is the very book which shall be thrown open on the last day before our sovereign Judge, and our justification or condemnation shall be fixed according to the rule of life written in it; and everything in us not conformable to this rule, such as our sinful desires, words, and actions, shall be rejected and condemned. An exami-

nation in accordance with the rules of this holy and divine book will be made of our whole lives, and Jesus will pronounce our sentence after He has made it manifest to ourselves and to the congregated world how we observed those rules; and hence St. Paul, speaking of those who do not obey the gospel, says to the Thessalonians: "In a flame of fire yielding vengeance to them who know not God, and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction from the face of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."[1] Oh, should not this terrible sentence make us fear to neglect the grand precepts and holy maxims of the gospel. We will not be judged on that day according to the rules and systems we made for ourselves after we abandoned those which Christ gave us; but we shall be judged according to that immutable and eternal law over which our rules never can claim prescription; and hence we should always have this noble rule of the gospel before our hearts and our minds. The life of a Christian is like an edifice which an architect intends to erect; he has the plan and design of his work always before him, he has a rule with which he measures all the stones for the building, he trims and proportions them to fit exactly in their proper place, so as to perfect his intended design; and in the same way we should follow the rule and plan of the gospel, touching the spiritual edifice we are building to the glory of the living God; and hence if we wish to live as true Christians, we must do so according to the rules of the gospel.

We will now consider the admirable effects which this divine doctrine produces in those who follow and practise it. There is no doctrine grander or more sublime than that of the gospel, nor is there any doctrine more holy or so well proportioned to the inclinations of man, and to the necessities of the miserable state into which he has fallen. It is grand and elevated, because it was taught by a man-God who received it from His Father, as He Himself declares; it is holy, because it leads us into sanctity, to detachment from created things, and to the love of God, who is the principle of all sanctity, and because it condemns the very least defects, and teaches us to practise every good and to be perfect. It is adapted to the inclinations and to the necessities of man, because man naturally desires to be great and happy, and he cannot be so except he lives according to the gospel; and it is adapted to our wants, because it prescribes remedies for all our spiritual maladies. The admirable effects of this gospel are—1st. That it changes the whole aspect of this world. 2nd. That it humbles man. And 3rd. That it elevates him.

[1] 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.

1st. The gospel was preached by twelve poor fishermen without any human help or money, or human or political wisdom—by men who were despised, persecuted, and exposed to all the hatred of the world. Behold what great effects it produced in those twelve men! We see whole nations changed through the efficacy of this gospel, idolatry demolished, and the worship of the true God established in its place; we see superstition destroyed, and adoration in spirit and truth erected on its ruins; we see true wisdom dislodging the false wisdom of pagan philosophy, and solid virtue displacing the false justice of the Jews. Through the effects of this gospel we behold the whole face of society reformed and renewed, the most shameful crimes and abominations abolished, ignorance overturned, error paling before the light of truth, the mysteries of iniquity yield to the mysteries of Jesus, Babylon the great is levelled, and the Church, the city of sanctity, is built upon its ashes. Through this admirable gospel chastity in marriage and virginity in millions, from both sexes, dissipated the abominable impurities of infidel nations; temperance and modesty abolished indecent costume and excesses in eating and drinking; humility and poverty of spirit destroyed pride and avarice; and order, justice, the love of God, and of the neighbour began to reign in the hearts of men, where disorder, injustice, contempt of God, murder, and vengeance before held undisputed sway; and hence St. Paul calls this gospel "The power of God unto the salvation of everyone that believeth."[1]

2nd. The evangelical doctrine humbles a man, because humility is absolutely necessary for all who wish to return to God and to be eternally happy; and as pride alienated us from the love of God, we must take a different way, the way of humility, to recover what we lost; and hence St. Augustine says: "The great design of the Son of God in becoming man, and, as it were, annihilating Himself in the mystery of the incarnation, was to teach us to be humble;" and this is why the evangelical doctrine teaches humility, in order to destroy our self-love and our desires for sensual pleasures and worldly goods. If we look over the gospel from Genesis to Revelation, we will find everywhere—1st. That the moral precepts Jesus teaches there go to instruct us how to be humble in heart and soul by the mortification of our passions, and to be patient and forbearing under sufferings, injuries, contempt, and humiliation the most profound; to grant pardon to our enemies with an universal charity, to fly from honours, worldly glory and ambition, and always to entertain a low and humble

[1] Rom. i. 16.

opinion of ourselves. 2nd. This gospel makes man know and feel the corruption of his heart, his weakness, and how powerless he is to do the least good without the grace of God, and it makes him see the darkness of his soul and the facility with which he commits the evils it prohibits, and, finally, it makes him understand that he is as spiritually deaf and blind as if he were dead, and that, therefore, he must divest himself of all that is self if he wishes to find true justice, which is in faith in Jesus Christ.

3rd. The gospel doctrine humbles man by subjecting his proud reason to believe mysteries above his reason and which he cannot comprehend, such as to adore one God in three distinct persons; to believe in an infant God, a crucified God, who was a subject of scandal to the Jews and a folly to the Gentiles; to believe that the mother of Jesus was the mother of God, and yet that she never ceased, even for an instant, to be a most stainless virgin; to believe that the sacraments work ineffable graces on the soul under mere external appearances; to believe that Jesus gives us, in the adorable Eucharist, His body, His blood, His soul, and His divinity, under the appearance of bread and wine; and, finally, to believe in all the other mysteries which captivate reason and hold it in humble subjection; and hence St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God unto the pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels, and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every understanding into the obedience of Christ."[1] 3rd. The gospel doctrine exalts us through the great and sublime truths it makes known to us, and through the great hopes it holds out to us, and by the holy dispositions it creates within us; and hence St. Chrysostom says, the gospel points out to us a God dwelling in heaven and on earth at the same time, and the only-begotten Son of the Father contracting an ineffable union with us by uniting His divine personality to our human nature. Could any news be more welcome and delightful than to hear that a war which raged from the beginning of time had suddenly ceased; that an offended God was reconciled to His sinful people by the sacrifice and death of His well-beloved Son; that the devil was confounded, death and the world conquered, paradise thrown open again, the curse inflicted upon man obliterated, sin exiled, error crushed, truth triumphant, a heavenly life ushered in upon this earth, the heavenly powers and intelligences made familiar with man, a God becoming like to us,

[1] 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

human nature partaking of the divine nature, a God delivering himself for the redemption of His enemies, and man entering into a union and alliance with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? And this gospel tells us what is more sublime, more incomprehensible, and more holy still, that a God who created this world and redeemed mankind sanctifies His once rebellious children and glorifies them with His glory. We can nowhere find in the works of philosophers truths comparable to those taught in the gospel, because everything in them is cringing, mean, and unworthy the dignity of man.

The gospel elevates man through the exalted hopes it gives him of the present and the future, because it promises the unfortunate sinner, if truly penitent, the entire forgiveness of his sins; that Christ is come to seek and to save all who are lost, to receive them with all the affection of a loving father, and to carry them in His arms as the good shepherd does his strayed sheep. This gospel promises to make mortal and sinful man the child of the Most High, to be born again of the Holy Ghost, and, if we do His holy will, to call Jesus our father, our brother, and our all. It promises that Jesus will make the daughters of this world His spouses if they renounce their vanities; and to souls suffering from temptation and affliction of spirit, it cries out: Go to Jesus, take His sweet yoke upon you, and you will find peace and repose; and hence He says: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatsoever you will, and it shall be done unto you;"[1] and again: "If any man love me, he will keep my word; my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him."[2]

When the Gabeonites incurred the punishment of death on account of their hostility to God, they felt very happy when Joshua commuted their sentence to the small labour of carrying the necessary wood and water to the temple; but the gospel promises that Jesus will make us sinners priests with Himself, one man with Him, living stones in His edifice, and even temples of the living God if we become reconciled to Him by a thorough conversion. "He shall be our recompense," says St. John, and we know, says he, "that when He shall appear we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is,"[3] that is, if we serve Him with fidelity we shall enjoy His inheritance, and if we be His true children He will give us a portion of his glory and of His felicity, when we shall suffer no more, either in the body which will be glorified like His, nor in the soul which shall be consummated

[1] John, xv. 7. [2] John, xiv. 23. [3] 1 Ep. iii. 2.

in an eternal union with Him; and having no other will than His, we will be partakers in His immutability and his immortality. This gospel promises an eternal kingdom to the poor, and glory without end to those who weep and are afflicted, and it promises that God will take care of His own in this life, and that all necessaries will be given to us if we seek first the kingdom of heaven and the salvation of our souls.

The gospel exalts the Christian, because it places Him over all the things of this world; and hence a Christian who lives according to this holy and divine doctrine can stand firm and immovable in the midst of dangers the most alarming, because he fears God alone, loves God alone, and from God alone he expects all he desires, and, therefore, no power can overthrow him. Being intimately united to God, he sees nothing great but Him, and, consequently, God is the only good he loves, and the only thing he fears to lose. So, too, when a man raises himself above this world by despising it, he very soon ascends much higher by a continual renunciation of everything he sees in himself, and then he becomes so united to Jesus, that he lives already in heaven by love and desire, and, invested with the merits of the man-God, he lives no longer, but Christ becomes his life, his light, his justice, and all things to him.

Is it allowable to read the gospel?

It appears most strange that this question should be asked in such an age as this, when nearly all persons can read, and the bishops throughout the universal Church have it translated into the language of every nation, so that all can read it in their mother tongue. The children of the Catholic Church were never prevented from reading and meditating on that book of eternal life; on the contrary, the Church always exhorted the faithful to nourish their souls with it. When we consider how frequently the holy fathers have exhorted people to read that holy book, we are surprised that there are so many Christians who read so many other books with avidity, and neglect altogether the testament of their eternal Father.

I shall never cease exhorting you, says St. Chrysostom, to read the Sacred Scriptures. Assemble your families, your children, and domestics in your homes, and read lectures for them from those holy books, and let no person give me those shameful and ridiculous excuses so worthy of condemnation, such as, I am married; public affairs engage all my time; I am an artisan, and must devote all my time to my trade to gain a living; I am a man of the world—it is the priests of the Church and religious that should be occupied read-

ing the holy Scriptures. "What do you say, foolish men? You are much more bound to read those Scriptures than they are, because they have not so much need of them as you have, and because you are so much tossed about by worldly cares and adverse waves that you are likely to be shipwrecked. Religious are free from the cares and occupations of this life, and hence beyond danger and safe on the shore, while you are in the open sea and in the midst of the tempest." Behold how the holy doctor spoke of the time in which he lived, and again he says: "If the devil departs from you when you enter a house where the holy gospel is kept, he will have much less courage to enter a soul occupied in reading it. Therefore, sanctify your soul and body; and one of the best ways to do so is to read the holy Scriptures frequently, and to have it always in your heart and on your lips." St. Jerome, writing to Guadentia on the education of her daughter, and also to Saints Paula and Eustochium, exhorts them never to omit reading the gospel, and hence he sent them translations which he made from the Sacred Scriptures; and writing to St. Paula, who never ceased weeping her folly whilst in the world, he exhorted her to save her sight so as to be able to read the holy Scriptures.

There is not a single one of the holy fathers who did not exhort others to read those holy books, and surely the same reasons which those holy doctors have had for their time still exist in our time; and St. Paul, writing to Timothy, says: "All Scripture inspired by God is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished in every good work."[1] The Sacred Scriptures are most useful to bring back the sinner from his wanderings. They make the imperfect holy and perfect; they make the timid fight courageously; they show the most perfect how very far they are from what they could be; and they fortify and strengthen all who are tempted; and hence St. Augustine says: "All the remedies for our spiritual maladies are found in the Sacred Scriptures. The proud find precepts there binding them to be humble; the angry are taught there to be meek; the lover of riches is commanded there to be poor in spirit; the ambitious man is taught there to love a hidden life and to seek the lowest place; the envious are taught to be charitable; the effeminate to be mortified; and the virtuous find in them many admirable examples for imitation." In those blessed books we can find the lively faith of the Centurion and the Cananean woman; the true and sincere

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

repentance of the sinful woman and the publican; the perfect conversion of Zacheus and the Samaritan female; a great contempt for the things of this world in the apostles; the austere penance of St. John the Baptist; the ardent and constant love for Jesus in the penitent Magdalen; the profound humility of St. John the Evangelist and the Centurion; the well-proved patience of Lazarus, poor and covered with ulcers; the great wisdom, purity, and sanctity of St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin; and the accumulation of all virtues in Mary, the spotless mother of Jesus.

After all this, who could doubt the utility of reading the holy Scriptures? A child is anxious to read the will of his father, in order to find out how much had been left or had been promised to him; but we are the children of Jesus, and hence we should be anxious to read His last will or testament to find out all the goods and graces He has bequeathed to us. No one can prevent the disciple from studying the doctrine taught by his master, nor the spouse from seeing what the contract of alliance contains which Jesus has made with her; no one should persuade the subject not to read the ordinances of his King, nor the Christian from seeing the precepts God has left him. The Jews were obliged to read and always meditate on the Old Law; they carried their law everywhere with them, and they had it written in their homes and even on their doorposts; and if we desire to be conformable to Jesus, our divine model, and to be saved, how can we, true Israelites, according to the spirit, neglect to read the Sacred Scriptures which contain the history of His life and virtues? Every man will be glad to hear from his absent friend, and the gospel enables us, Christians, to hear and know all about our true and only friend Jesus, visibly absent from us; and hence we should be constantly reading this holy record of our dear and adorable friend who died for our redemption. Jesus gives us a pledge of His friendship in the gospel, because He tells us there how much He loves us, and He inspired the apostles to write this gospel for us in order to cheer and comfort us in His visible absence; and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "For what things soever were written, were written for our learning, that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope;"[1] and we read in the first book of the Machabees how Jonathan, high priest of the Jews, said: "We need none of these things, having for our comfort the holy books that are in our hands."[2]

When some persons in St. Chrysostom's time used to say they

[1] Rom. xv. 4. [2] 1 Mach. xii. 9.

had no time to read the Scriptures, he said: "Have you no time to learn to live as Christians and save your souls? Why not give up some portion of your worldly occupation, and thus make time to read them? You make time for unnecessary amusements and recreations, and you will not make time to know the law and the life which Christ, your Father and your model, taught and led upon earth." St. Elius whilst working for princes, found time to read this holy book, and had it open before him while he laboured, and from time to time read some portion of it. Would that all other artisans could follow his example; and very soon their labour would become more holy and less fatiguing, and they would find themselves insensibly instructed in the sublime truths of the living God. Alas! how painful it is to see Christians reading romances, comedies, and fabulous histories with constant toil and avidity, and altogether neglecting the study of the most holy and useful of all books, the gospel. We will now consider how we should feel when reading the holy Scriptures.

1st. It is necessary to read them with faith, because they were written to nourish our faith; and we must read them with an humble and ardent faith, and a faith accompanied with a profound respect, because God makes known His mysteries to the little, and He conceals them from the proud and the wise according to this world. The gospel is like a great river which submerges the proud, and to which the humble go to extinguish their thirst; the meek and humble will drink, and a submissive faith will make us docile and adore what we cannot comprehend. There the obedient will find great and incomprehensible truths; there the Word speaks sometimes in the second person of the most holy Trinity, and often He humbles Himself and speaks as the Word made flesh; and, above all, we must read this gospel with submission and docility to the Church, which infallibly expounds it for us; and this is why St. Peter says: "No prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation,"[1] and hence we must accept the gospel in whatever sense the Church explains it to us.

The gospel must be read with the most profound respect, because everything in it demands this respect from us, because it contains the word of God and of His divine Son, and because we discover this divine Son hidden under the words and letters written there; and hence we must see that God speaks there, not so much through His prophets as through His only-beloved Son, Jesus. St. Augustine places the gospel in almost the same rank as the holy Eucharist, because he wishes that Christians would listen to it with the same

[1] 2 Peter, i. 20.

respect as they approach to Jesus, and that they should fear as much to let a single word or truth of it fall to the ground as a particle of the holy Eucharist. It was always placed in a conspicuous and elevated place in all the general and particular councils of the Church. The Armenians used to bless the multitude with it, and St. Chrysostom says that when Christians carried it upon their persons, the devil fled before them. We read in ecclesiastical history that St. Barnabas copied the gospel of St. Matthew with his own hand, and although it was not interred with his remains it was found afterwards upon his body in the grave; and St. Cecilia always carried a copy of the gospels on her person as a protection against her spiritual enemies; and hence we see what great respect and veneration the Christians of former days paid to the holy gospels.

2nd. We must read this gospel with a love for truth, because if we do not do so we shall very soon grow weary with it, as our passions are opposed to it, and its precepts go to crucify them.

3rd. We must seek truth alone in this holy gospel, and we must love it also, no matter how opposed to our nature it may appear; and when reading it we must apply it to ourselves and try to conform our feelings, our conduct, and our lives to its principles; and we must not read it merely to know it and to speak about it, because such action would be vain curiosity and ridiculous ostentation. The gospel is a mirror for the soul, before which we should frequently present ourselves to discover our defects, and after having discovered them to correct them, because it is not those who know the law that will be justified, but those who observe it with fidelity and perseverance.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, DOCTOR AND MASTER OF CHRISTIANS.

I adore you, my Saviour, as the only doctor of mankind, because as the Word you speak to them, as the light you enlighten them, as a master you teach them, and as the truth you make them love and practise your holy doctrine. Grant me grace to become your disciple, show me the true way that I may never go astray; speak to my heart and let my ears understand your divine instructions, that my soul may be the school in which you will teach them, and your gospel the doctrine you will teach there. You have the words of eternal life, and they have the life and the spirit of the soul. You teach what you learned from your Father only, and your doctrine contains all that is great and holy, and all that is worthy of the God who spoke them through His Son. He has commanded us on Thabor

and at the river Jordan to hear you as our doctor and our master. Behold me, dear Lord, at your feet to hear the words of truth as they flow from your most holy lips—truths which your apostles preached, and your Church collected into the gospels. Save me, dear Jesus, from those masters who speak against you, who strive to alienate me from the holy severity of your gospel, and who pretend to give me a sweet, an easy, and an agreeable way to heaven, and thus to prevent me from entering on the narrow way, the only way that leads to eternal life.

It is only you, my Jesus and my true master, that I wish to hear in the reading and the meditation of your law, in the school of your Church, and in the gospel, and in this holy gospel I will find that heavenly doctrine you taught while here on earth. This is the doctrine you still teach and speak to me, and these are the sublime truths you revealed to all who followed you, and confessed that never did they hear man speak such words before. You speak to me still in this divine book, and I ask pardon for the little use I made of it, and for the careless way I read it. I hope to apply myself diligently for the future to study, to meditate, and to learn from it how to live as a true Christian, and as your faithful disciple; because I shall learn in that holy book all my obligations to you and to my neighbour. O holy gospel, what immense benefits you procured for me!

This divine Word humbles my pride, calms my anger, confounds my ambition and my vanity, teaches me to crucify my flesh, and to subject it to the spirit; it makes my degradation known to me, sweetens my sufferings, makes me strong and courageous in the battle I am fighting against my enemies, and comforts me in affliction and poverty; and, lastly, your gospel makes me know what you are to your Church and to my soul, and all you did to make your creatures love you. I find everywhere in it examples of your power, your wisdom, your sanctity, your goodness, and all your virtues. O gospel teeming with so many admirable things, whence comes it that the most part of mankind neglect and despise you? O testament of the man-God who became the Father of all Christians, whence comes it that you are so forgotten by the children of this Father? O contract of the eternal alliance of God with man, can it be possible that you are ignored by the spouses of this divine Saviour? Do not, dear Lord, permit me to be entangled in those misfortunes; grant me grace to read your holy gospel with the docility of a true disciple, with the simplicity of a child, with the faith of a practical Christian, with the humility of an unlettered creature, with the love and charity of a

spouse of Christ, and with the respect which the word of a man-God merits. Whenever I read this holy book banish from my heart and mind every thought and desire of vain curiosity, and grant that I may only seek there to edify and instruct myself, so that I may live a holy life.

Grant that I may adore all the truths you teach me there, and that I may meditate on them with faith and love all the days of my life; that they may be the rule of my conduct, the consolation of my exile and my pilgrimage, and the bread and nourishment of my soul. Grant me grace to comprehend it in its proper sense, and that I may not be on the number of those from whom it is hidden, as St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Whose minds the God of this world hath blinded, that the light of the gospel should not shine on them."[1] Ah, dear Lord, never permit me to lose a relish for your holy gospel; fill my soul with that holy unction which those who love it feel when reading it. Grant that it may always abide in me and I in it, and that I may live and die in the practice of it, so that, aided by the hope it will give me, I may be able to ascend into heaven to live with you, and to hear you publish there this eternal gospel, which you caused your angels to proclaim. Amen.

CHAPTER XXI.

ON JESUS, THE BREAD OF OUR SOULS.

Jesus is the only true bread to sustain and give life to the soul, and He Himself makes known this in a very beautiful manner in the Gospel of St. John, and this is the subject we intend to explain in the following pages. One of the principal objects Jesus had in becoming man was to abolish all the figures of the Old Law, and to teach us what was the truth, the reality, the end, and the accomplishment of all these figures. The manna with which the Israelites were fed in the desert was the first figure Jesus explained to the Jews. They believed that the manna was a heavenly bread, but Jesus said no, that He was the true bread that cometh down from heaven for the life of the world. "Amen, amen, I say to you Moses gave you not bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven."[2] Therefore, Jesus is the bread of the soul, whom God gave us in the incarnation when He first sent Him into this world. He is also the true bread from heaven, where He had a celestial and eternal birth in the bosom of His Father, and

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 4. [2] John, vi. 32.

He had a temporal birth in the chaste womb of His virgin mother, Mary.

He is the true bread which giveth true life, which sustains it and makes it advance in goodness, which makes the soul perfect, and which is the fulness of all His members for time and eternity. Jesus nourishes the soul with a faith animated by charity, and hence He says: "He that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in me shall not thirst;"[1] and St. Paul says to the Ephesians: "We come to Jesus by faith, that Christ may dwell by faith in our hearts;"[2] that is, when faith is animated by charity; and hence St. John says: "He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him," because this charity fills up the soul, fortifies it, and gives it a divine life. Jesus also nourishes the soul by prayer, that is when it meditates religiously on the mysteries He has worked, and as St. Augustine says, by making the application of them to itself, and by reflecting on them in the depths of her heart. It is in prayer she tastes how sweet the Lord is, and in this holy exercise she is united to Him in contemplation; and hence St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "That she is transformed into the same image from glory to glory as by the spirit of the Lord."[3]

The Christian finds in this holy practice of prayer a nourishment which Tertullian says enriches and satiates the soul, and gives her blessings and comforts which neither creatures, nor the goods nor all the pleasures of this world could ever be able to give her. A soul created to the likeness of God is something so grand that no created thing could content or fully satisfy it, because God alone is the only food able to fill up her desires; and hence any heart not nourished by Christ must be a frightful void and must suffer extreme want. All that is great and beautiful, pleasing and delightful in this world, is nothing more than the food of falsehood and the appearance only of true bread, and brings an eternal hunger on those who love them, and cause extreme suffering to those who are filled with them; and hence Solomon says: "The bread of lying is sweet to man, but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel."[4] What do men gain here who satisfy themselves with worldly goods and pleasures but bitterness, disappointments, and eternal sorrow in the life to come? Happy is the soul that is attached to Christ, that believes in Him, loves Him, and feels all His pleasures in being nourished and united to Him.

We will now consider how Christ is the bread of the soul through

[1] John, vi. 35. [2] Ephes. iii. 17. [3] 2 Cor. iii. 18. [4] Prov. xx. 17.

His divine Incarnation, and in the adorable sacrament of His body and blood. "The bread which I shall give you," says the Son of God, "is my flesh for the life of the world."[1] And hence when we receive this holy sacrament with proper dispositions, we are nourished with the body and blood, the soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine. Therefore, we will consider—1st. The nature of this adorable bread, and the names given to it by the fathers of the Church and in the gospel. 2nd. The figures and prophecies of the Old Law, which foretold and announced its coming into this world. 3rd. The obligations and the necessity which bind us to partake of it, and the reasons for those precepts and obligations. 4th. Who are those who are bound to receive it, and what should be their dispositions, particularly if they lost their baptismal innocence. 5th. How persons should live who desire to receive this divine bread frequently. 6th. The terrible crime those commit who receive it in a state of mortal sin. 7th. The wonderful effects this bread produces in all who receive it worthily, and with proper dispositions. Each of those points demands a particular consideration.

Nothing could be grander, more holy, and more significant of God's goodness to man than this divine bread considered in itself. Nothing could be grander, because it is Jesus Christ Himself, the God-man, the Son of the living God, the splendour of His glory, the figure of His substance, in whom is contained all the treasures of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God; who by His omnipotent power, which He delegates to the officiating priest, changes material bread into His own substance. Nothing could be more holy, because it is the author of all sanctity Himself, He in whom all holiness exists, the plenitude of the divinity, of grace, of truth, of glory, and of all other virtues, and because it is a mystery in which He embodies all His other mysteries, and applies through this divine bread all the fruits and merits of them to our souls. Nothing so much manifests His goodness and love for us as this adorable bread, because He gives Himself entirely to us in it, together with all He is and all He has, and He unites Himself to us so closely that we become only one being with Him; and hence the Council of Trent says "that this bread or sacrament is the most abundant effusion of God's divine love for man."

It is called the *Communion* because the Catholic Christian and Christ become mutually united in it, He to us and we to Him and to every member of His mystic body. It is called the *bread of the*

[1] John, vi. 52.

children because He gives it to them as the pledge of His infinite love, and as the greatest good and the grandest inheritance He could leave them on this earth. It is called the *bread of heaven* because He came forth eternally from the eternal bosom of His Father; He descended upon this earth, became man, and, at the command of His priests, descends every day on our altars to give Himself entirely to us, in order to fill us with a great contempt for earthly things and a great love for heavenly things. It is called the *bread of angels* because those glorious spirits feed, as it were, upon it by contemplating its ineffable beauty, by loving it as the eternal Word, as the Son of God, as their life and their light, and through it they adore and praise God in His essence and in the trinity of persons.

It is called the *living bread* because He lives in it before His Father's eyes, although He appears dead and without motion to our corporal eyes under the appearance of bread and wine. It is called the *bread of life* for many reasons—1st. Because Christ is the principle of that Christian, spiritual, and divine life which we ought to lead, and because He became the principle of that life by His incarnation. 2nd. It is the bread of life because His humanity is nourished by the divine personality with which it is united. 3rd. It is the *bread of life* because all who receive it with a pure heart receive an increase of the divine life which they had received in the other sacraments. 4th. It is the *bread of life* because it is necessary to live a life of grace in order to receive it worthily. 5th. It is the *bread of life* because it is the principle and the source from which emanates the glorious and immortal life with which the elect shall be invested on the last day.

It is called the *pledge of that future glory* which Christ promised to His children, because He assures this glory to them by giving them this bread as a security of His promise. It is called the *holy supper* because He instituted it whilst at supper with His apostles; and it is called the *holy host* because Christ is offered up in it as the victim of the Christian religion, a victim worthy of God and substituted instead of the ancient victims, and a victim sacrificed as a continual memorial and renewal of the death and passion of this Word made flesh.

What are the figures given to us in the Sacred Scriptures by the Holy Ghost of this adorable bread, and in what way are the prophecies applied to it?

The first figure given to us of this divine food in the Sacred Scriptures is the tree of life which God planted in the garden of

paradise, and which is a representation of the Church also. It was a figure of Jesus Christ, the true bread of life, because He Himself said: "Whoever shall eat of the bread which I will give you shall live for ever."[1] And what God did in preventing Adam from eating of the tree of life, the Church has done and continues to do in preventing persons infected with mortal sin from receiving the holy Eucharist.

1st. As God, says St. Augustine, expelled our first parents from paradise by a species of excommunication, so in our Church all who are unworthy, on account of their unpardoned crimes, are prevented from approaching the altar in order to receive the adorable Eucharist. 2nd. God commanded Adam, after He expelled him from paradise, to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow; so, too, the Church separates sinners from the assembly of the faithful and from the communion of the body of Christ, until they acquired by their tears and penances a right to eat of this adorable bread. God placed a cherub at the entrance to paradise with a flaming sword, to keep Adam away from the tree of life; so, too, the pastors and ministers of the Church are placed on guard to prevent all who are unworthy by their bad lives from approaching the body of the Lord; and hence those pastors should use the sword of the divine Word, inflamed with the fire and zeal of charity, to teach sinners how they should be prepared to receive the adorable Eucharist.

The next figure is the paschal lamb, in which we find a figure of the sanctity of the Eucharist, the dispositions necessary to receive it, and the admirable effects it produces.

1st. The paschal lamb should be a male without blemish, so, too, our Redeemer, whom we receive in the Eucharist, is the true Lamb without stain, because no one was ever able to discover the shadow of an imperfection in Him; and as the paschal lamb should be a male, so Jesus is the power and strength of the Most High in the Eucharist, the arm of the omnipotent, the true God and man, and our true pasch.

2nd. The Jews were bound to eat the paschal lamb after it was immolated, and hence it was a figure that our Eucharist is a true sacrifice, because Jesus, who offered Himself up and was immolated by the Jews on the cross as a victim of love for our sins, is offered up daily to His Father at the altar by the priest, as a memorial and continual renewal of His death, and which we should commemorate not only by the sacrifice, but by carrying the mortifications of Christ

[1] John, vi. 52.

upon our bodies, and by dying to sin and to ourselves every day of our lives.

3rd. The paschal lamb should be roasted before the fire, then eaten in haste with bitter lettuce and unleavened bread, with a stick in each person's hand, and their loins girded. All these circumstances are worthy of notice, because they shadow forth the holy dispositions with which the real Paschal Lamb should be received. The unleavened bread, says St. Paul, signifies the purity of heart necessary for the reception of the body of the Lord; and hence he says to the Corinthians: "Let us feast not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of truth and sincerity;"[1] that is, we ought to be new creatures in Jesus Christ, and that the malice and corruption of the old man should not dominate in our hearts, but rather the truth and the sincerity of the new man, Jesus Christ. The bitter lettuce signifies that we should approach in order to receive Jesus with a contrite and penitential heart, and hence all who have led a mundane and criminal life, and who desire to receive the holy Eucharist, should know that they cannot have that unspeakable right till they have deplored their crimes by the necessary penitential regret, severe penances, and bitter and copious tears, because Jesus loves to dwell in hearts bruised and afflicted at the sad recollection of how hard and bitter a thing it was to have abandoned the Lord. The girdled loins, the rapid repast, the shoes off the feet, and the staff in hand, all figure that we should keep nourishing ourselves in the holy Eucharist as long as we are travellers and strangers on this earth; that we should be as poor pilgrims in the world, using it as if we used it not, continually yearning for heaven, our true country, and always ready and equipped to depart from the servitude of this exile, figured by the land of Egypt. The cinctured loins represent how Christians should be mortified, and what a horror they should have against impurity—a crime the most opposed to the sanctity of the adorable Eucharist, in which God, the spouse of virgins, gives Himself to His creatures. The naked feet signify, says St. Augustine, the affections which carry the soul to God; and the shoes off the feet point out the care we should take to preserve those affections unsullied, and to walk this earth in purity where we are so much exposed to the corruptions of the age. The staff, which was to be used on their journey by the Israelites as a support or as a means of defence, signifies the cross of Christ, on the merits of which we ought to lean

[1] 1 Cor. v. 8.

and place our confidence on our journey to eternity, and hence that we ought to carry our cross and partake of the adorable Eucharist till we reach the promised land of eternal life. The lamb should be roasted at the fire to signify the love of Jesus for us in the holy Eucharist, because it was His love for us that caused Him to institute it, and it is His love that gives it for our spiritual life and good, and hence we ought to receive it with hearts full of burning love.

4th. The lamb should be eaten entirely by the same family, all the male members of which family should have been circumcised; and all this was a figure that Christ gives Himself to His Church only, that none could partake of it but those who are united in faith, and feeling, and charity, and that none but the baptised and the circumcised of heart, and those who cut off all criminal attachment to creatures and all sins which exclude from the kingdom of heaven, should dare to approach it.

5th. The Israelites were commanded to eat the entire lamb, the head, the feet, and the entrails, which was a figure of how Christ gives Himself entirely to us in the holy Eucharist, as God and man. The head of the lamb was a figure of Christ's divinity which we receive in the Eucharist, and hence how we become participators in His divine nature. The feet were a figure of Christ's lowliness, and consequently of how we should be conformable to His divine abjection and profound humiliations. The entrails were a figure of Christ's interior life, which we should strive to imitate by "putting on the bowels of mercy and tenderness,"[1] as St. Paul says to the Colossians; and hence it is necessary that Jesus should be entirely formed within us, that His life should shine out in our lives and in all our conduct, that this divine Lamb, with whom we are incorporated and nourished, should be our life, and that we should live only in Him and for Him.

6th. They were ordered to sprinkle their doorposts with the blood of this lamb, so that when the destroying angel would be passing he would see it and spare them; so, too, the blood of Jesus should be the distinguishing sign to all unbelievers and heretics that we are the children of Jesus and the people of God, because we have been redeemed by the blood of this Lamb without stain, we have been watered with it at our baptism, we received it in the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist, and it should so operate in us, that we never will be involved in the ruin and destruction which God shall inflict, through His avenging angels on the last day, on all offenders against His infinite justice.

[1] Coloss. iii. 12.

The third figure of the Holy Eucharist is the manna with which the Israelites were fed for forty years in the desert until they reached the promised land. All that the Sacred Scriptures tell us of how the angels of God prepared the manna in the air can be applied to the Holy Eucharist, and should make known to us the wonderful effects which the presence of Jesus produces in the souls of all who receive Him with the proper dispositions. When the Israelites saw this heavenly food on the ground, they cried out in wonder *manna*, or what is this we see? Moses ordered the people to take only one measure of this food, and whether they took more or less, they found on reaching home that they had only the prescribed quantity. It always fell after the dew and before sunrise, and those who went to seek it after that time could not find any. It had the taste of mingled oil and honey, and was very delicious and agreeable to the taste; it was given to them only in the desert and when in want of every kind of food, and only after they escaped from the land of Egypt and from the servitude of Pharoah, and yet it became distasteful to most of them. It fell before them on their march, and it ceased to fall as soon as they reached the land of promise.

All these incidents can be very well applied to the Holy Eucharist, because Moses did not give the true bread from heaven. It was only Christ who gave Himself to His people in the Holy Eucharist; and hence we should cry out with much more wonder than the Israelites did at seeing the manna—what is this we see exposed on the altar for our adoration and our food? What is this grand and ineffable mystery in which God, by an effect of His love and omnipotence, gives Himself to His creatures? Oh, with what sentiments of wonder and adoration we should reflect on this grand mystery of love! As the manna could not be divided, because each person could have only one measure, so, too, the Holy Eucharist cannot be divided, because it is Christ, who is indivisible. We should receive this adorable food only when we are in a state of grace, that is when our souls, like the manna, are watered with a heavenly dew, and when they are prepared, like arid land, by tears of penitential regret, and when we are in such a state that this divine seed will fructify and make us produce good works. We must have escaped from Egypt, and be entirely separated from the love of this world, and we must be resolved never again to follow its false maxims. We must be delivered from the slavery of the devil, and live far away from every occasion which could induce us to sin. As the manna was given to the Israelites only when they were in

want of other food, so, likewise, the Holy Eucharist is given to those only who feel their spiritual miseries, who bewail them, and who put their confidence in God, and not to those who are slaves to sin and to their passions; and hence Christ says in the Apocalypse: "I will give a hidden manna to the victorious."[1]

The Adorable Eucharist is not for those who lead an effeminate life—a life neglectful of salvation; because those who do not labour should not eat of this bread, and when such do unfortunately eat of it, they find death instead of life; whilst those who live according to the maxims of the gospel and in the mortification of their passions find in it those unspeakable delights which God always gives to the well-disposed recipients. This divine bread enlightens the spirit, gives new strength to the heart, a contempt for the world, comfort to the afflicted, and peace to those in sorrow; it sustains and fortifies the weak; it makes those who tasted the false sweets of this world feel how sweet the Lord is; it creates a desire to see the Lord dwelling in the souls of all Christians, in the souls of all who love Him, who know Him, and who feel the dangers and sorrows of their exile, and it gives many other blessings according to the number and to the fervour of the good dispositions each recipient may possess. Notwithstanding all these blessings and favours, there are thousands who entertain a dislike for this adorable bread, just as the Israelites did for the manna; and hence they live in a state very much to be deplored, a state into which the tepid and the idle generally fall, and this indifference conducts them, as a rule, into such a mortal languor as to drift them insensibly into a hardness of heart which is the most fearful of all spiritual maladies. We should never cease receiving this ineffable good, this adorable bread, until we shall have arrived in the true land of promise, where we will be inebriated with the glories of that delightful dwelling-place, and where we will have no more need of this adorable sacrament, because then we will be united to our unveiled Redeemer, and, consummated in a union with Him by a perfect charity, we will live with Him and in Him by an ineffable transformation.

The fourth figure of Jesus in the holy Eucharist are the twelve loaves, called in the Old Law "the loaves of proposition." God commanded that twelve loaves should be placed daily before Him on the golden table before the sanctuary, as a continual offering from the twelve tribes of Israel, and that none but the priests could eat of them. So, too, Jesus is always exposed on our altars before the eyes

[1] Apoc. ii. 17.

of His Father as a continual offering for all His people, and He is presented every day to God by the Church through the ministration of His priests, in order to adore the grandeur of His eternal being, to thank Him for His benefits, to obtain remission of our sins, and to supplicate Him for His graces.

The fifth figure of Jesus in the holy Eucharist is the ark of alliance, and as the holy fathers have applied it to this most holy mystery, we should consider it in a very particular manner. The miraculous relics contained in this ark, the religious awe observed by the Israelites when carrying it, the advantages it procured for those people, and the punishments God inflicted on all who profaned it, prefigured the blessings gained in the Eucharist by all who receive it as they ought, and typified the chastisements to be suffered by all who profane this adorable bread. Jesus in the Eucharist is the ark of alliance which God has made in the New Law with His followers, and which He renews by the communion, where He unites Himself to us in an ineffable manner. One measure of the miraculous manna was preserved in this ark, also the tables of the law and the rod of Aaron, which miraculously bloomed as an indication from God that the tribe of Levi should discharge the functions of the priesthood, and all the ministrations of the temple. So, too, Jesus, the true manna and heavenly bread, carries in His heart the two tables of the Law, the love of God and the neighbour, because He gives an infinite honour to His Father in this sacrament, and because He makes us comprehend how much He loves us, and in what way we ought to love Him and one another. We also find the rod of Aaron in the ark, which was a figure of the power and authority which Christ, as priest, exercises over us; because being invested with the priesthood, He discharged its functions in the holy Eucharist. The propitiatory, from which God delivered His oracles and made known His will, was upon the ark; so, likewise, Christ, the host of propitiation for our sins, is ever on our altars, where He manifests His will to faithful souls who consult Him with a true desire to follow it; and there He speaks to their hearts, and His words are oracles which He makes them understand.

Whilst the Israelites were marching through the desert, they entertained no fear of their enemies, because they were accompanied by the ark. So, too, we should have no fear of our spiritual enemies while marching through this exile, and even through the shades of death, provided we are fortified and nourished by Jesus in the holy Eucharist; and how happy we will be if this divine ark, Jesus Christ,

would always remain with us, because in His holy company we can securely pass the rivers of Babylon, or the torrents of iniquity overflowing this earth. But, unfortunately, it very often happens that the power of our passions is merely suspended, because the tide of worldly sports, amusements, and other seductive follies, are only interrupted on communion days; and when that holy day is passed, the unsubdued passions enter upon their former career, and very often with more unbridled licence than before, because there is then no grace in the souls to arrest their course. How happy the Jews would have been had they always honoured the ark with the respect it deserved; and how happy we would be if we had not profaned the holy Eucharist, the true ark. When Jesus enters our hearts through the holy Eucharist, He establishes His grace and His peace in them, and He fills them with His gifts and His benedictions; and when we profane this holy mystery, what an injury we do to our souls, and what terrible punishments we deserve from the God we offended; and hence, as He permitted the Philistines to take away the ark from the Israelites as a punishment for their sins, so, too, He has allowed heretics in every age of the Church to usurp the sanctuary and trample under foot the adorable ark, the true body of Jesus, and all on account of the sins of the people, and of the little respect they had for the holy Eucharist; and although He permits those inconceivable profanations, He never allows them to go unpunished. When the Philistines seized on the ark, they were afflicted with mysterious sores, which caused them to return it forthwith, and wherever it passed the people suffered from many terrible visitations. Fifty thousand of the Bethsamites where stricken dead for looking at it only once, and Oze was suddenly struck dead because he touched it in an effort to save it from falling from the chariot on which it was being carried. All these facts have been recorded to impress on us a holy fear for the Adorable Eucharist, and to teach us with what profound respect we should honour the body and blood of Jesus, which is the reality of what the ark of alliance prefigured. Although the punishments inflicted by God on those who profane the Holy Eucharist are not always visible, still they are not the less severe; on the contrary, they are more to be dreaded, because they are spiritual, and affect the soul, which God allows to run blind and become hardened, and which He abandons to the unbridled desires of the heart.

The sixth figure of the Holy Eucharist is the bread of Gedeon. "And when Gedeon was come, one told his neighbour a dream, and in this manner related what he had seen. I dreamt a dream, and it

seemed to me as if a hearth-cake of barley bread rolled and came down into the camp of Madian, and when it was come to a tent it struck it and beat it flat to the ground. And he to whom he spoke answered, this is nothing else but the sword of Gedeon, the son of Joas, a man of Israel, for the Lord hath delivered Madian and all their camp into his hand."[1]

We will now explain all the details of this marvellous dream. 1st. The hearth-cake of barley bread is a figure of Christ, the living bread, who annihilated Himself at His incarnation and in the Holy Eucharist, in both of which He gave Himself to man as the effect of His love and ardent charity, and where He is under the humiliation of our humanity, and under the appearance of bread in the Holy Eucharist, like the barley-cake under the cinders. 2nd. The bread rolled down and came into the camp of the Madianites with whom the Israelites were at war; so, too, Jesus descended from heaven to become man in the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary, and He descends every day on our altars, and also on the altar of each one's heart who receives Him. 3rd. This bread levelled to the ground one of the strongest tents of the Madianites; so, too, when Jesus, the eucharistic bread, enters the soul of the just man his enemies are beaten flat on the ground, and he acquires a power not only to fight but to overcome and vanquish them; and hence all true Christians make use of this divine bread to strengthen and defend themselves against their triple foe—the world, the devil, and the flesh.

The seventh figure of the Holy Eucharist is the bread sent by God to the prophet Elias when he had to fly from the persecution of the infamous Jesebel. This holy prophet abandoned the highways, and seating himself under a tree prayed to God to take him away from this world, and then he fell asleep. Soon an angel came and awoke him, and told him to arise and eat; and when Elias was fully awoke he saw before him a barley bread baked under some cinders, and also a vessel of water; and after he had eaten he fell asleep a second time, and the angel awoke him again, and bade him eat as he had a long journey before him. The prophet obeyed the angel, and was so nourished with this bread that he felt strong enough to walk without food for forty days till he reached Mount Horeb, the mountain of the living God. So, too, Christians who have to fly like Elias from a world where they are hated and persecuted, who live as retired as their condition of life will permit, and who are so detached from this present life that they

[1] Judges, vii. 13, 14.

are always longing after their true country—the Horeb of God's glory—all these should frequently nourish themselves with the bread of angels, the adorable body of Jesus. But when tepidity or indifference causes us to sleep on our journey, the angel of God, in the person of our pastors, awakes us and commands us to eat of the adorable bread of the Eucharist, to enable us to walk on the narrow way to the eternal hills of the heavenly Sion. And as we see some of those souls cast down at the prospect of the long and painful journey before them, we see also the necessity of having pastors to encourage and feed them with the living bread which alone can strengthen and fortify them.

Now that we have considered the principal figures typifying the holy Eucharist, we will consider what prophecies indicate the excellence and the good effects of this adorable sacrament.

1st. When Jacob was blessing his children, he said to one of them: "Aser, his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield dainties to kings."[1] Many of the holy fathers say that this prophecy refers to Jesus in the holy Eucharist, because as God and man he is that *excellent bread* given to us in order to unite us to Him, and to make us live His life. Kings shall find their dainties in Him, because all who participate in the royalty of Jesus by the grace of being Christians, and who become masters over their passions through the spirit of this divine Saviour, will find in this sacrament nourishment for their souls, and many consolations which will give them ineffable joy.

The second prophecy is from Isaias, who says: "And the Lord of hosts shall make unto all people in the mountain a feast of fat things, a feast of wine, of fat things full of marrow, and of wine purified from the lees."[2] This mountain is a figure of the Church, and the feast prepared there is the body of the Lord, full of nourishment and flavour all divine, which fortifies and circulates over the soul, and, as Tertullian says, "fattens her in God." The wine of this feast is the blood of Jesus, which diffuses over our souls a kind of soporific that stills our passions and irregular desires, and elevates us into such an ecstasy in God that we become entirely forgetful of all earthly things. This is the sacred wine, says St. Augustine, which so inebriated St. Lawrence and so many other martyrs, that they could not hear the sighs of their friends and parents when they came forth for martyrdom, and through the divine efficacy of this wine thousands of saints were plunged into a heavenly and bewildering ecstasy.

[1] Gen. xlix. 20. [2] Isaias, xxv. 6.

The third prophecy is that of Zachary, which says: "For what is the good thing of Him, and what is the beautiful thing of Him, but the corn of the elect and wine springing from virgins."[1] Jesus is the grain of corn which has been cast into the earth, and which God has given to all whom He has chosen and separated from this corrupt world, because this adorable bread is distributed to those only who are free from the maxims and corruptions of this world by the sanctity of their lives, and because God in His goodness could not give us a gift grander, better, or so perfect as His own divine Son, equal to Himself in every respect. This holy wine which God has given to His people is the blood of Jesus, not that wine which causes so much crime and desolation in this world, but that which purifies and sanctifies those who receive it worthily, and becomes to them the germ of immortality and the principle of every virtue.

The fourth prophecy, which can be called a figure also, is the bread and wine offered up to God by the high priest Melchisedech, and of which Abraham partook on his return after defeating the five kings with whom he was at war. Jesus is the true Melchisedech, the high priest of the living God, who continues to offer every day His body and blood under the appearance of bread and wine—the very same Jesus whom His priests offer up on our altars, and whom they distribute to the children of Abraham, the inheritors of His faith, and who come to receive Him, weary and fatigued after defeating the world, the devil, and the flesh; and this is the peace and the recompense the Church gives to all those Christians who triumph over their sins and their passions.

Is there a precept binding us to receive this adorable bread of the body and blood of Jesus?

Jesus not only instituted the sacrament of His body and blood as a continual sacrifice in His Church, and as His offering, His adoration, and His host of propitiation and thanksgiving, but He commands us to receive Him, not only spiritually, but really and truly; and this precept was given from the foundation of Catholicity by Himself and His Church, and, therefore, we will consider these two precepts and the reasons why they were issued.

1st. Jesus commanded us to receive the adorable Eucharist when He said: "Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of man and drink of His blood, you shall not have life in you."[2] This awful language proves the obligation of this precept, because all those who do not observe it shall not have spiritual life in them, and hence they are

[1] Zach. ix. 17. [2] John, vi. 54.

excluded from the kingdom of heaven. We cannot say, like the people of Caphernaim, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" because we believe He is sufficiently powerful to do so, and sufficiently wise to give it in a way befitting our nature, and because He is sufficiently good to give it, and to find out a means most agreeable to us to receive Him. This is a precept which enables man to possess Him under the appearance of bread, who is the joy of the blessed in heaven, and on whom they contemplate by the light of His glory.

But why does Jesus wish us to receive His body and blood?

1st. To strengthen us when we are weak. 2nd. To augment and preserve the life we received at baptism or penance. 3rd. To unite us to Him in a most special manner. And 4th. To make us participators in the victim which He offered on the cross.

Jesus wishes that we would receive Him in the holy Eucharist, because our self-will is so weak, and continues so even after we are regenerated in baptism and justified in penance; and hence where could we find sufficient strength to sustain us in this sad condition if Jesus had not prepared an antidote to repel the adversaries that afflict and persecute us? Therefore, we should unite ourselves to Jesus in the holy Eucharist, because He is the arm of the omnipotent, and the power of the Most High, and because if He be with us we have nothing to fear on our journey through the shades of death. He will still the storms which our passions excite around us, and, fortified with this bread of Gedeon, no enemy can stand against us; and as Elias walked to Mount Horeb on the strength of the barley cake which the angel of God had given him, so, too, we will walk with courage and strength invincible the whole narrow way to heaven, our true country. The martyrs of our Church always received the holy communion to make them invincible in the dread combat they were going to fight, and hence St. Cyprian says: "We give the communion of Christ's body and blood as their spiritual arms to those we exhort to martyrdom, because they could not suffer and sacrifice life for the faith unless they first received from the Church the body of Jesus to sustain them in the battle, and because the divine Eucharist fills them with courage, animates their failing spirit, and dissipates their despondency." Confessors loaded with chains called for it through their prison bars, and said, like the Israelites when fighting against the Philistines: Bring us the ark of the Lord, that we may be saved from our enemies; and scarcely had they received the holy Eucharist than they became like lions for the faith, and remained unmoved against every trial and torment; and hence we

see one of the effects of this holy sacrament, and one of the reasons why Jesus wishes us to receive it.

The second reason why we should receive the holy Eucharist is to augment and preserve the spiritual life we received at baptism or in penance, and hence we see how necessary it is to receive this divine bread if we wish to live a spiritual life. Nothing can be conceived grander than this spiritual life which elevates us above our comprehension, makes us partakers of the divine nature, associates us to the Holy Trinity, and makes us children of God from being children of men. We are bound to acquire this life, and to make it more perfect as long as we possess it; and hence St. John says in his Apocalypse: "He that is holy let him be sanctified still;"[1] and St. Paul says to the Philippians: "Walk in the way, and interrupt not your course by any fall."[2] "Forget what is behind you, and look at what is before you."[3]

Alas! how many obstacles are opposed to our advance in a spiritual life, and how very difficult it is to preserve it when we have gained it, because the whole world appears conspiring to wrest it from us. The converted or regenerated Christian has to travel over a perilous and dangerous journey from here to eternity; he is like the infant Moses cast out upon the Nile in a cradle made of rushes, and who was saved from a grave in those waters by the great mercy and special providence of God; he is like a man seated at a table filled with poisoned dishes, because his whole pathway is beset with storms and strewn with hidden poison; his senses are roused by a thousand seductive objects, his spirit is captured by the false maxims and the pernicious principles of wicked worldlings, his heart is tempted by the unsubstantial promises which this world makes to its admirers, and that vicious longing he has to possess all he sees and all he hears of—an inclination which is no other than his concupiscence, the fruit of sin. A guileless Christian is placed in the Church as Adam was in paradise, between the forbidden fruit and the tree of life. He would have preserved his state of innocence if he continued to eat of the tree of life and abstained from the forbidden fruit; so, too, a Christian who had escaped from a life of sin and became a new creature, must abstain from the forbidden things of this world and partake of Christ only, the true fruit of life. We all know that prayer, the word of God, retirement, and the practice of good works augment and preserve the life of the soul; but the best means to preserve and to increase its health is to receive the holy Eucharist often and with

[1] Apoc. xxii. 11. [2] Philip. i. 10. [3] Philip. iii. 14.

proper dispositions, because the body of our Lord is the principle of life, and even the very life of the soul; and as we cannot receive Him worthily without receiving the life of the soul, it follows that He brings this life into the souls of all who love Him by charity. He who eats of this adorable flesh lives in Christ as He lives in His Father, and no better proof could be furnished of how this bread preserves and increases the spiritual life of the soul than the language of the holy fathers.

St. John Chrysostom says that this holy sacrament tempers the heats of concupiscence, weakens the violence and bridles the power of the passions, and so much so, says St. Bernard, that if those who communicate do not feel so often or so violently the motions of anger, envy, impurity, and other passions, they ought to give thanks to the adorable body and blood of Jesus that operates those admirable effects in them; and, therefore, those persons whose passions are still unsubdued should have great reason to fear for the validity of their communions. Jesus impresses Himself on the soul in the same measure as she is prepared to receive Him. He always gives her a new desire to perfect herself, and to advance more and more in a a spiritual life, and He does so in order to enable her to correspond with the great love He has for her; and hence she performs all He demands from her with renewed love and ardour, sin becomes an object of horror to her, and she embraces everything virtuous with a holy joy; and the more she is nourished with the body of the Lord and His love, the more she longs to be further nourished with them, and her only sorrow is that she has not enough of them. Finally, this holy sacrament cures all our spiritual maladies when we receive it with a pure heart, and hence the Council of Trent says: "It is a remedy which heals our daily wounds, saves us from mortal falls, and augments and preserves our spiritual life."

The third reason why Christ commands us to receive the holy communion is the intention He had to unite Himself to us, and we can have no doubt about this fact when we reflect on all He said and did on that point. He united Himself to mankind in general by His incarnation, and thus makes them participators in His divine nature, and He unites Himself to us in particular by the sanctifying grace He gives us, and He unites Himself to us much more closely, more really, and more supremely in the holy communion, where as God and man He enters into and takes possession of our hearts; and hence He said after giving communion to His apostles: "My Father, I am in them, and you are in me, that they may be made perfect in one,

and that they may be also one in us."[1] St. John Chrysostom says: "It is the wish of those who love to be near to those they love, and Jesus says to those who communicate, I desire to become your brother, and in order to become so I became man, and now I give you the very same flesh and blood by which I united myself to you, in order to return in some way that which I borrowed from you;" and hence, continues the learned doctor, "Jesus wished that His body and blood should be mingled with ours, in order that all the members of His Church should be most intimately united to their chief." Behold what a privilege and blessing those deprive themselves who communicate without faith and charity, or who abstain through negligence or contempt, and how much they deserve our tears and compassion for voluntarily neglecting so great a good.

The fourth reason why we are ordered to communicate is to participate really of the victim which was offered up for us. The sacrifice of the cross is the essence of the Christian religion, and it would be in some way imperfect if we were not able to receive externally the victim which was offered up, and this is proved by the fact that God commanded the Jews to partake externally in all the pacific sacrifices of the victim offered up, because, if otherwise, the sacrifice would have been imperfect. But as the sacrifice of the cross was pacific as well as expiatory, we should communicate internally in the victim, and externally also; but this latter could not be accomplished had not Jesus arranged this admirable means of sacrifice and eucharistic communion, where we participate in the body and blood of Jesus, offered up for us on the cross. This communion is necessary for all Christians, at least implicity, or by desiring to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ, and to participate in the sacrifice of expiation in order to have a part in the mysteries, the merits, and the spirit of Jesus Christ. Our divine Redeemer has not determined the time we should receive the holy communion, but the Church has, and commands all Christians to partake of it at that time.

The General Council of Trent commands all the faithful of both sexes, who have come to the use of reason, to receive the holy communion within the paschal time, if their confessors consider them disposed. The Church was obliged to make this precept on account of the tepidity of those latter times, and she felt bound, though with extreme pain, to inflict censures on all who did not fulfil this precept. Is it possible that this benign mother, the Church, was compelled

[1] John, xvii. 21, 23.

to threaten her children with such severe punishment for neglecting so unspeakable a blessing? Nothing so much manifests the negligence and little love of Christians for Jesus as this commandment prescribed for them by the Church; but the early Christians had no need of this precept, because their lively faith and the burning love they cherished for Jesus, together with the ardent desire they had to be united to Him, caused them to seek this adorable bread as often as they could receive it. Those early Christians felt bound to receive the holy communion on all the great festivals, and many ages passed before this early fervour cooled. There was one practice amongst the early Christians which makes us see how they understood the necessity of receiving the body of Christ for the life of their souls; they moistened a consecrated particle in the chalice, and allowed the infant to extract from it the consecrated wine, and then gave the particle to an older child; and if our love for God were such as this we would not wait for the paschal time, but we would live so holy as to be able to receive often, and, if allowed, every day.

But as we are more strictly bound to receive at paschal time than at any other, it is well to know the reason why. 1st. Because this was the time Christ instituted the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, and administered it to His apostles for the first time; and hence it is right that we should make it at this time, to show our respect and gratitude to Him who gave us so priceless a gift, and because the Israelites were bound to eat their paschal lamb at this time, which was a figure of the real Paschal Lamb, which we, the people of the New Law, receive in the holy communion.

2nd. We communicate at paschal time because it is the season in which Jesus suffered and died, and in order that His merits might be applied to us in a more abundant and particular manner, by receiving the victim and participating in the sacrifice of the cross.

3rd. The Church commands us to receive at this time because it immediately follows the Lenten Season, during which the faithful practise good works and spend much time in prayer, tears, fasting, and other penitential labours; and hence the reception of the holy sacrament at this time may be regarded as the recompense of those mortifications and humiliations.

4th. The season in which Jesus died and arose from the dead ought to be a most befitting time for us to communicate, because those two facts remind us that we must be dead to sin, that we must renounce the world and subdue our passions, that we must put on the new man, and live for the future only for God.

Does the Church oblige us to receive the holy communion at other times as well as during paschal time?

Catholics are obliged to receive the holy communion when in danger of death from sickness; and the Church has made it a custom to preserve consecrated particles in order to fortify souls on this awful occasion with the bread of the strong. St. Justin says, in his second apology, that after the priest had finished the Mass the deacons distributed consecrated particles to the faithful present, and then carried them to distribute to the faithful who could not be at Mass through illness; and St. Cyprian says, in a treatise which he wrote on those who had fallen away during the persecutions, that the martyrs carried consecrated particles on their person in order to receive them, and thus be strong in the hour of danger. St. Basil says that solitaries carried particles into the desert, to communicate themselves in times of illness, and when they could not be present at Mass; and St. Ambrose says that his brother Satyr, when going on a sea-voyage took the consecrated particle with him, that a great tempest arose, the ship was wrecked, that he hung the pix which contained the adorable particle around his neck, and that through this most precious treasure he was saved from death. Many historians record that the particles were preserved in many churches in little golden towers suspended over the altar, and St. Gregory of Tours says that in certain churches there were doves of gold and silver on the altar, in which consecrated particles were preserved for the use of the sick, and in other churches they were preserved in a small vessel suspended from a crozier.

St. Denis of Alexandria speaks of an old man named Serapion, who yielded under persecution, and who afterwards did penance for his scandal; that the old man, who had fallen suddenly ill, sent a young lad for the priest, whom he found dangerously ill; and that the sick priest, knowing that St. Denis ordered that the body of the Lord should be given to the dying, "that they may depart this life in full hope," gave the consecrated particle in a pix to the messenger, who brought it to Serapion, who died soon after he had received it. St. Honorius, Bishop of Verceil, shortly after he had retired to rest, heard a voice saying: "It is time, arise and go." He arose, and brought the consecrated host to St. Ambrose, who died soon after it was administered to him.

The Church wishes for many reasons that her children should communicate whenever they are dangerously ill—1st. That Jesus would be our viaticum and our nourishment on the long journey

between here and eternity; and the bread given by the angel to Elias, and which enabled him to walk to the mountain of the living God, was a figure of this.

2nd. The Church wishes us to communicate in our last illness that we may have a safeguard against the temptations of the devil, who comes at the hour of death to see can he find anything belonging to him in us, and to make the last effort to damn us; but when this exterminating angel shall see us marked with the blood of the Lamb, he must pass us over uninjured; and we will depart in peace from the Egypt of this world into heaven, the true land of promise.

3rd. We should receive the holy communion at the hour of death in order that this last sacrament may be a new assurance of that pledge of eternal life promised to us by our Redeemer.

4th. It is necessary to communicate at the hour of death, that this holy sacrament, which is a memorial of our Redeemer's death, may specially recall to our minds at that solemn moment the memory of the death and sacrifice of our divine victim, so that we can enter into His feelings and dispositions, and thus die in Him, and consummate our sacrifice in His.

5th. We ought to communicate in every kind of severe sickness, that Jesus may be our comfort in sufferings, that He may help us to bear them with patience and love, and that, uniting our sufferings with His, they may be acceptable to God and worthy of eternal life.

6th. We ought to receive the holy communion at the hour of death, in order to appear before God invested with Jesus and His merits, which are the nuptial robes necessary for admittance into the eternal marriage feast of the Lamb.

7th. We ought to receive the holy Eucharist just before our bodies are consigned to the earth, so that the body of Jesus may be a glorious resurrection and germ of immortality to our bodies; and hence Christ Himself said: "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life everlasting, and I will raise him up on the last day."[1]

But this divine bread does not produce those admirable effects in the souls of those dying sinners who receive it in a state of sin, unpardoned and unrepented, for it will be the seal of everlasting reprobation to those unfortunates—a terrible curse upon their crimes, and the reason why they shall be for ever damned.

Who are those who have a right to partake of this adorable bread, and with what dispositions should those communicate who lost their baptismal innocence by mortal sin?

[1] John, vi. 55.

Nothing is easier than to fulfil those precepts of Christ and His Church which bind us to receive the body of the Lord, if we merely consider their eternal fulfilment; but as the soul is to be nourished, it becomes necessary to have certain dispositions, without which it is impossible to communicate as Christ and His Church command, and those feelings are not so easily acquired as many persons imagine. Some persons believe that it will suffice to repent and confess their sins, and perform the small penances imposed upon them, to entitle them to receive the adorable Eucharist; but they must undeceive themselves, and learn that all those who lost the grace of God through mortal sin and a criminal life, must have certain dispositions of heart and soul before they can worthily receive the body of the Lord, and hence all the holy fathers addressed to sinners in general the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice."[1]

And those fathers say that this proving consists, first, in sounding our hearts to see if they are truly converted; and, second, in spending some time in penance and the practice of good works before receiving the body of the Lord. Therefore, we will first consider when we are truly converted and healed from the wounds which sin has inflicted on our souls; for, says St. Ambrose, "no person can receive the body and blood of Jesus who has not been previously cured of his spiritual wounds, and when he has been so cured, he can partake abundantly of the heavenly bread." This is the order which the holy doctor and all the other saints desire to be observed throughout the Church. We can lose grace and abandon God by pride, avarice, and in a thousand other ways; but we cannot return to Him except by an entire conversion of the heart.

All confessors agree that a good confession is necessary for all sinners before communion, and that this confession is not an infallible mark of a thorough conversion, and hence we will consider when we will possess this necessary and true conversion. 1st. It is sufficiently agreed upon that confession alone is not a certain sign of a true conversion. 2nd. That the promises and protestations made there not to relapse are not sure indications of this conversion. 3rd. That the necessary sorrow and contrition for the remission of sin are not so easily acquired as many people think; because this contrition is a grace to be asked, and hence we should not persuade ourselves that we have true contrition of heart because we happen to feel very penitent. 4th. The doctrine of all the fathers and confessors of our

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 28.

Church is that the loss of baptismal grace is repaired only by much weeping and penance, and the justice and mercy of God demand this reparation. Finally, it is an unquestioned fact that a true conversion means the love of God paramount in the heart, and an entire exemption from mortal sin; and hence St. Augustine says: "Each one should examine his conscience, and if he find that he has fallen into crime, he should purify himself by prayer, alms, fasts, and tears, and a good confession; and then he can go with confidence to receive the body of the Lord, because he who was once dead is now risen and begins a new life." And St. Basil says that we ought to be dead to sin, to ourselves, and to the world when we approach the holy communion.

Therefore, we should examine our conscience and see if we are truly dead to sin, that it no longer reigns in our hearts, and that our passions have lost their empire over us; because it often happens that our vices are only asleep, and that the least noise will arouse them. We often abandon the occasions of sin only for a short time after holy communion. But we do not cut off the foot or the hand, or pluck out the eye that seduces us to sin; we merely suspend their action for awhile, but our hearts are always open to God's eyes; He sees into their deepest depths, and beholds the yearning for sin in the ascendant; and hence St. John Chrysostom says: "Take care, do not approach the holy communion unless you are very holy," because, says he "it is not the remission of your sins that makes you holy, but the presence of the Holy Ghost within you, and a rich measure of good works." It is necessary that the spirit of Christ should dwell in our souls, that the soul should internally feel that she is the child of God; and as the Holy Ghost prepared the Blessed Virgin for the great mystery of the incarnation, so, too, He should fit up, enrich, and adorn our souls to make them befitting temples for the spiritual birth of Christ.

Persons will say, perhaps, it is true that a man should prove himself, but how can he know that he has proved himself? In such a case he must get himself proved by a prudent and enlightened confessor, an experienced physician, who knows all the maladies to which the soul may be subject, what remedies to prescribe, and when they have taken effect and worked the cure, and, consequently, when she is in a fit state to receive the bread of angels. We are blind judges in our own case, because we often flatter ourselves touching our conversion, and the devil often suggests that we can approach the holy communion, like so many others who are as unconverted and unprepared as we

are. We are often attracted by a crowd of communicants to go and do likewise, but we should have ourselves proved by our confessor, who will examine our hearts and see our lives, our inclinations, our previous conduct, and whether our conversion entitles us to receive the holy of holies. The rule always followed in the Church is, that those who have fallen should present themselves to their confessor, and learn from him how to do penance and how to dispose themselves for holy communion; and pastors should not permit those who had fallen into certain crimes to approach the holy communion until they had proved, by a long and searching trial, that they were truly converted.

And what is the reason for all this precaution?

The reason is that they are certain that time and labour are necessary for all who have lost their baptismal innocence. The second way to prove ourselves is to spend a long time in the practice of good works and in the exercise of penance, in order that the sinner should feel how much it has cost him to regain the right to receive the holy communion. The holy fathers used to say to those who presented themselves to them after their fall: Remember from where you have fallen, and do penance. And when sending them away from the church, they used to say to them what God said to Adam: "You must eat your bread with the sweat of your brow." St. John Chrysostom says: "This hidden manna is given only to the virtuous, and to those who fought against the world, the devil, and the flesh, and gained a victory." But, unfortunately, the greater number of persons now believe that they are sufficiently prepared to receive this living bread if they make a short and hurried examination of conscience, if they tell the same sins as before, if they rise a little earlier than usual, if they hear Mass, and say the prayers before communion with their lips, but not from their hearts; but this is not the proving of ourselves demanded by St. Paul and the holy fathers.

There are others a little more scrupulous who take some days to examine their conscience, and perform some good works, and then they seek a confessor, and expect to be at once admitted to participate in the divine mysteries. "But," says St. Ambrose, "those sinners do not so much desire to be released from their sins as to deceive the confessor, because, instead of exposing their criminal consciences, they conceal their deformity from him. I wish," says this learned doctor, "that sinners will hope to obtain pardon for their sins from the mercy of God, and by the authority of the Church;

but they ought to demand pardon with tears and great penitential regret; that they would beseech all good people to unite their prayers and their tears with theirs, in order to appease the Lord in their favour; that if the confessor should put off their communion they will enter into themselves, and feel that they have been treated with too much indulgence; that they will redouble their regret and return more sorrowful than before; and that they will cast themselves at their confessor's feet, and, embracing them, water them with their tears, so that the Lord can say to them, as He said to the penitent in the gospel: 'Thy sins are pardoned, because thou lovest much.'" Could anyone dare approach the table of the Lord, fresh from his sins and unpardoned in the tribunal of penance? Could anyone present his tongue, stained with blasphemies, at the holy altar, without first purifying it in the praises and benedictions of the Lord? Could a man open his mouth there, polluted by a thousand excesses in eating and drinking, without purifying it before by a good course of abstinence? How could a man approach this holy table with a body stained by many criminal actions, a soul filled with the images of recent impurities, and a heart corrupted with a love of this world, and take no time to efface and destroy them?

But the difficulty is to know how much is required to prove oneself. Well, we must first suppose, as was the practice in the early ages of the Church, that those who had fallen into crime were deprived of the holy communion. 2nd. That they should practise penitential works for a long time. 3rd. That those penances were lengthened or abbreviated according to the fervour and amendment of the penitent. 4th. That they received holy communion when they were proved, and when their confessors were assured, as well as they could, that the conversion was real and true. It is true that public penances for seven and sometimes for ten years, are no longer imposed by the Church on sinners before admitting them to holy communion; but instead of these, sinners should weep and sigh and perform good works; they should humble their souls by fasts and mortifications, until it can be reasonably judged that they had returned from their wanderings, that they had put an end to their wicked habits, and that they had good grounds to hope that the conversion will be true and persevering; and this time of trial depends on the fervour and spirit of penance with which these works shall be performed. The sinner, while in this state of probation, should imitate the publican in the gospel, who would not dare to approach the altar; and he should copy the humility of the Canaanean woman, who believed herself

unworthy of the bread of the children; and hence we see from all that has preceded that if the holy communion were only a figure of Christ, the Church never would have demanded such a perfect preparation, such long penances, and even such exclusions, that the sinner could not look on the adorable mystery.

Is it allowable to receive the holy communion frequently, and who are those who are permitted to enjoy this privilege?

The spirit of the Church is that the faithful can frequently receive the holy communion, and hence the Council of Trent says: "This holy assembly desires that the faithful who assist at Mass should receive the holy communion not only in spirit, but really." This was the practice of the early Church, because the faithful used to communicate every time they assembled at Mass. It was their lively faith, their great love for Jesus, their longing for martyrdom, the scrupulous care they had for their consciences, and the habit of frequently calling to mind their crucified Saviour, that caused them to approach the holy sacrament every day, because they believed that the *daily bread* which Christ commanded us to pray for was the Eucharistic bread. St. Cyprian says: "We demand that this bread be given to us every day, lest we who are incorporated with Jesus, and who receive the holy Eucharist every day as the salutary food of our souls, might become separated from Him on account of some great sin, which would oppose the reception of this celestial bread;" and St. Ambrose says: "As the holy Eucharist is our daily bread, why do some persons pass whole years without receiving it? Therefore," says he, "live so holily that you can communicate every day." It was not the fasting, the mortifications, and the other penances imposed on the penitents, that caused them any pain or sorrow, it was the misfortune to be deprived of the holy communion. "If you do not communicate," says St. John Chrysostom, "why do you not depart from the Church with the penitents when the holy Mass is finished?" and St. Basil, Bishop of Cesarea says that "the faithful used to communicate four times in the week." Now we see what the practice of the early Church was regarding frequent communion—a practice in union with the spirit and intentions of Christ, and a practice so clearly and emphatically endorsed by the councils and defined by the holy fathers; and hence we see the reason why the Church invites her children to come to the table of the Lord, and why she threatens them with such terrible censures for neglecting this divine practice. But if people had a right love for God and His Son Jesus Christ, or if they knew the great spiritual benefits to be

gained by frequent communion, they would not neglect this divine banquet.

Can all persons be admitted to frequent communion? It is certain that the holy fathers exhorted all to come to holy communion, but they allowed the frequent use of it to those only whose lives were more holy and perfect than ordinary Christians; or, it may be, that those frequent communicants had never lost their baptismal innocence, or, if they did, their return to grace was so sincere, and their perseverance so edifying to those they formerly scandalized, that they were judged truly penitent and good Christians, living according to the maxims of the gospel, and living a life of such edifying and practical devotion, that they could receive the holy communion as often as they desired.

2nd. But in order to receive the holy communion frequently, it is necessary to live as true Christians and disciples of Christ, by observing all His precepts, by renouncing ourselves and carrying our cross after Him; and this renouncement consists in crucifying our own interests and all the irregular desires springing from cupidity; it consists in giving up our own will and human feeling to the will of God and to those who represent Him in our regard, by living detached from all we possess and retaining nothing as our own, and in being always ready to deliver up all we have, and to sacrifice all our earthly goods, our riches, rank, health, and even life itself for His sake; it consists in using this world as if we used it not, living as strangers on this earth, and having no desire for the things we may see on the way, and seeking only the kingdom of God and making it the only object of our desires. The precept of loving God with our whole heart embraces this general renouncement.

If we wish to live as true Christians, we must carry our cross every day; we must suffer all kinds of evils with patience—the corporal sufferings of each day, the accidents of life, the troubles of the times, the loss of goods, the insults and humiliations heaped upon us by others. To carry our cross every day is to mortify and crucify our passions every day, and to lead a life of penance; and hence St. Paul says to the Galatians: "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with their vices and concupiscences."[1]

To live as a Christian is to follow Christ, to live a life conformable to His, to imitate His example of patience, His humility, and His charity for His neighbour, and all His other virtues. To live as a Christian is to live according to the spirit of Christ; and hence St.

[1] Gal. v. 24.

Paul says that only such as those can be called the children of God, and, therefore, we should examine and see if it is the spirit of God that rules all we do, if it operates in our occupatious, our labours, our enterprises, and all our undertakings. To live as a Christian is to live according to faith, to hope, and to the charity we received at baptism, and which we ought to practise on all occasions. And, finally, says St. Augustine, if we wish to live the life of a Christian in its lowest degree, we must be absolutely exempt from all those faults which a Christian with a firm faith and a lively hope never thinks of committing; and for frequent communion we must not commit a deliberate venial sin, and we must not have even an affection to do so.

St. Francis de Sales says that persons who desire to communicate every day should be exempt not only from mortal sin, but from all affection for venial sin as well, and they should have, in addition, a great wish to communicate. St. Isidore says that those who live badly in the Church, and yet believe that they purify themselves by holy communion, should know that they increase their crimes by such conduct instead of diminishing them, and, besides, that they are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; and hence the prophet Jeremiah says: "What is the reason that my beloved hath wrought much wickedness in my house? Shall the holy flesh take away from thee thy crimes in which thou hast boasted?"[1] Therefore, those who are infected with mortal sin should abstain from the holy communion until they are purified in the sacrament of penance; and when they see those who are exempt approaching, they should reflect on the awful separation to be made on the last day between the just and the wicked, when the just shall be admitted into the marriage feast, and the wicked eternally excluded. Then they will humble themselves, then they will begin to repent and to reform their lives.

When we said above that all who approach the holy communion should be free from every affection for venial sin, we did not mean to convey that they should never commit a venial sin, which is impossible in our fallen state, because when Jesus gave us this divine sacrament He did not intend it for glorified beings, but for mortal man subject to a thousand infirmities; and hence our meaning was that such people should not commit a deliberate venial sin, nor have any wilful affection for it. Surely, we have an affection for venial sin when we do not correct them because they are small, and when we do not adopt some means to combat and destroy them. It is a sign

[1] Jer. xi. 15.

that we are attached to venial sin when we do not strive to expiate them by penance, prayer, good works, and other practices opposed to them; and hence St. Gregory says, as we sin every day, we should correct them every day by penitential tears, and we should cry out with St. Peter: "Lord, wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head."[1]

If we wish to communicate often, we must have a great desire to do so, and we must examine well from what principle this desire originates, because a person may desire this heavenly bread as he would natural bread. A person in a burning fever will sometimes desire to eat; but this desire comes from some disorder of the body, and would kill it if gratified; but when the desire comes from some well-living person, and one who labours hard for perfection, then the desire is good. When a person loves well, and labours hard to fulfil all his obligations, the love of God will produce in him this hunger and desire for the holy communion; and St. John Chrysostom says: "This is the necessary desire, because it springs from the ardour of charity;" and St. Gregory says, "That it is only those who are starving for this celestial food that are fully nourished with it, because those only who are entirely free from vice that shall be replenished with the grace and virtue contained in this adorable sacrament." But the desire to receive this divine bread is wrong and irregular in those souls still ailing, and whose passions cause a burning fever within them, because the time to receive is when we are longing and thirsting after justice and piety. Some persons are troubled because they cannot feel this desire, but a sensible desire is not always necessary, because it will suffice to feel the want of this adorable nourishment.

We said before that a true and solid devotion was necessary for all who wish to communicate frequently; but this disposition is necessarily contained in a truly Christian life, and as persons often deceive themselves on this point, we will explain in what it consists. Some persons make this devotion consist in a certain sensibility experienced on communion days, and when they feel so they believe that they made a good communion; and there are others who fear that their communion is not a good one, because they feel no sensible emotion at all; but when we shall have examined in what this devotion consists we will find a way to satisfy all consciences. This devotion consists in an efficacious will to please God in all things, and to manifest this will in all our conduct; and hence our Redeemer

[1] John, xiii. 29.

says: "Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."[1] Therefore, true devotion consists—1st. In the exact and persevering practice of the Christian virtues of humility, charity, silence, obedience, simplicity, in the mortification of the senses, and in such a submission to God's will that what He wishes we shall wish, and shall perform exactly what He desires.

2nd. It consists in a lively recollection of the presence of God, in a strict attention, and in an uninterrupted vigilance over ourselves, and in a holy internal and external retirement; because nothing is more opposed to piety than dissipation of the heart, of the spirit, and of the senses.

3rd. True devotion consists in a spirit of self-sacrifice, in a continual contempt of ourselves, and of all things in this world, and in accepting and bearing with submission, in silence, and without ever complaining, all the humiliations and crosses which may happen to us in the order of Providence.

4th. True devotion consists in performing all the exercises of religion in the spirit of faith, adoration, and love of God, and in an internal and external worship of His divine majesty.

5th. One of the obligations of true devotion is to perform all our actions in union with Jesus Christ—that is, to neither say, nor do, nor suffer anything but for Him, with Him, and in Him; and on account of this union with Jesus, we must entirely depend on His spirit and on His grace, and always act with this divine chief as if one being with Him.

6th. True devotion consists also in fulfilling all the duties of our state with fidelity, never omitting any of them on the pretext that they are not commanded; and in keeping God always in view whilst discharging them.

7th. True devotion inclines us to a true retirement and separation from this world, to avoid unnecessary visits, and to pay them only where duty, courtesy, and charity demand them from us. It teaches the soul to fly from gossipings, and to crush our yearning to know what does not concern us; because a solidly pious soul will only mix in things pleasing to God, and will never embarrass herself with the affairs of others, because her only occupation will always be labour, prayer, and the reading of holy books. Such a soul dreads idleness, and flies from it as one of the most dangerous of the vices; and as

[1] Matt. vii. 21.

every moment of her time is most precious, she so manages it as not to waste a single second of it.

8th. True devotion consists in being affable, kind, cordial, honest, and charitable to our neighbours, to bear patiently their defects, to assist them in want, and to compassionate their spiritual and temporal miseries, and such is an epitome of what solid devotion is.

Most persons now make their piety consist in external exercises, and they seldom trouble themselves about the interior. Those devotees confess and communicate often, but they never make an effort to practise or acquire virtue. They allow the devil to seduce them through the bad example of others, but if they wish to communicate often they must possess an ardent charity, a lively faith, and a firm hope, less vanity, minimising superfluities and unnecessary expenditure, and devoting less care to their bodies, and more to mortification. The holy fathers permitted only two kinds of persons to frequent communion—namely, those who laboured much to advance in perfection, and those who had advanced much in it; and Jesus says to them as He did to St. Augustine: "I am the food of the strong, increase and grow in virtue and you will be strong in me." As eagles, says St. John Chrysostom, never look down upon the things beneath them when soaring up through the heavens, so should we, Christians, do when assembled round the altar to receive the holy communion. We should strive to discover whether it is more profitable to our soul to receive holy communion frequently or not; and the surest way to find that, is to follow the advice of a prudent confessor, who will prove us and tell us which is most useful for us.

The holy fathers not only taught but practised the dispositions necessary for frequent communion; and St. John Chrysostom tells us that he once felt an ill-will against an offending person, and forthwith he abstained from celebrating the holy sacrifice, and got another bishop to officiate in his place. St. Jerome would not enter the church if he had an illusion during the night, or if he felt more than the ordinary emotion of some passion. A poor man was found dead once outside the walls of Rome, and St. Gregory, Pope, abstained from saying Mass for several days lest this misfortune should be, in any way, attributable to him as ruler of the holy city; and St. Francis de Sales said that a certain confessor acted right when he ordered a penitent who committed an act of impatience to abstain for several days from receiving the holy communion. These examples prove that the holy fathers believed and taught that far greater

sanctity was necessary for frequent communicants than for weekly and monthly recipients.

People can communicate daily as the early Christians did, if they are as holy and live as piously as they did; but if we expect the same privileges which they enjoyed, then, like them, we should have but one heart and one soul, we must live in the practice of perfect charity, in meekness and in patience, affectionately and compassionately, bearing with each other, always humble and always cherishing a sincere desire to do good to everyone. Like them, we must be free from envy and dissimulation, and conduct ourselves with great simplicity of heart; like them, we should be never-failing observers of the doctrine taught by the apostles, and we should regulate our lives by the gospel precepts which they preached. We should be always ready, like them, to give up all we possess, and even our lives, for Jesus, for His gospel, and for the love of our neighbour. Like them, we should not only love prayer, but we ought to persevere in it not only in our churches, but in our homes. We should never forget the presence of God, and we should always manifest in our actions the spirit of adoration and prayer. If we do not hold our goods in common, as they did, we ought to be, at least, disposed to make some small sacrifice for the relief of our brothers in want, and we should be always ready to act kindly and favourably to them. Like those early Christians, we should not be attached to our worldly goods, to our parents or friends, nor even to our lives. We should be always animated with a lively hope for the eternal and invisible goods beyond the grave; we should be invested with Jesus Christ, filled with His holy Spirit, having our heavenly country alone in view, and constantly yearning for the happy hour when we shall be safely landed there. When we shall be animated with these dispositions and possessed of those virtues, we can communicate as often as the early Christians did; but how few at the present day have arrived at this necessary perfection, and hence only a few are worthy to receive this divine sacrament every day.

Have persons anything to fear who receive every day? They must take great care not to approach this adorable Eucharist through custom, without fervour and piety, and solely because holy communion is prescribed for those days; and we regret to have to say that this fault is much more prevalent amongst women than amongst men. It would be much more commendable if those persons would follow the ardour of their love for Jesus, and their desire for the adorable sacrament, than to be making rules for

themselves, and when they do not feel pressed by those movements of piety, they should abstain from communion, and, taking the counsel of some wise director, postpone it for a few days, to weep over their indiscretion and their insensibility to God.

Those persons should also avoid approaching the holy table through imitation, and desiring to do what they see others doing, because God does not conduct all in the same way. Truly happy are those souls whose only concern is to please God, and whose only care is to follow the way God points out to them; and truly happy, too, are those who delight without envy in the good they see others doing, who are persuaded of their own unworthiness, who are afflicted at the sight of their faults, who weep over them, and thus nourish their souls through prayer with the bread of compunction and the bread of the Word, because they are sometimes deprived of the adorable body of Jesus by God's holy will.

Persons who frequently receive the holy communion should be much more careful to purify themselves before God than others, and hence they should divest themselves of all self-love, and should often quicken their desire to participate, lest they should engage in this most holy action through human views, and thus, instead of advancing in perfection, they would render their communions profitless; they would weaken their power to advance, and they would expose themselves to the danger of abusing the holy sacrament, and falling into mortal guilt; but the best course to follow on occasions like this is to consult and follow the counsel of a wise and experienced confessor.

What should we do immediately after holy communion?

If ever there was a precious moment in our lives, it surely is the time immediately after communion, because then we should be entirely absorbed in Jesus, whom we possess in our hearts. All the motions of our senses should be suspended, and all the operations of our hearts at rest, so that this divine Saviour could act undisturbed within us, and in order to receive the impressions of His holy spirit, communicated by His adorable humanity. This is the time to thank Him for this great and ineffable gift of His love; this is the time to devote all our attention to the Lamb without spot, to admire His goodness, to adore His infinite grandeur, to beseech Him to repair the havoc done to our souls by mortal sin, and to make us participators in the merits of His death and other mysteries. This is the time to offer up this divine Victim to His eternal Father, beseeching Him to grant us mercy and pardon through His divine Son, and to

give us the graces and virtues most necessary for our state of life; and we should not be content with these sentiments, because the Holy Ghost will inspire us on those occasions with other desires, which we ought to follow with the greatest fidelity.

What effects does the body of Jesus produce in those who are occupied with the foregoing dispositions?

1st. We must premise that there are mysterious graces as well as mysteries, all of which are incomprehensible to the human intellect, and can only be discovered by faith. The incarnation of the Word and the death of the man-God are incomprehensible, and the reconciliation of man with God is not less so. Baptism and penance, the remission of our sins and our adoption as children of God, are not comprehensible nor more within the grasp of reason. The adorable Eucharist is a mystery which human reason cannot comprehend, because who could ever imagine that Jesus is really and entirely under the appearance of bread and wine on our altars? And as the effects of this sacrament are not less comprehensible, we will explain them according to the teachings of faith, and reduce them to two principal effects.

1st. Jesus unites Himself to us in a most ineffable manner in this sacrament, and we are united to Him in it in the same way. 2nd. In this sacrament He makes us live His own life—the very life He received from His Father.

We will explain the first effect, and say that as all the happiness of man consists in being united to God, so all his misery must consist in being separated from Him. We were separated from Him by sin, and hence the great object Jesus had in instituting those mysteries and sacraments was to reunite man to God by uniting us to Himself, and, through Himself, to His Father; and hence He became man and made us participators of His divine nature, and this is the reason why He instituted baptism and the other sacraments as well. There is no comparison between the union we contract with Christ in the other sacraments and that which we contract with Him in the adorable Eucharist, because the latter union is the perfecting of all the other unions. 1st. It is the grandest and most intimate union which man could have on this earth with his God. 2nd. This union communicates the greatest sanctity to the soul and body of the recipient.

1st. It is the grandest of all unions, because Jesus really gives Himself to us in this union, and, what He does not do in any other sacrament, He makes us participators of His body, His blood, His

soul, and divinity. He united Himself to our human nature in His incarnation, but in the adorable Eucharist He unites not only His divinity to us, but His humanity as well, because He gives us in the Eucharist all He received from His Father as the Word, and all He received from us as the son of man. St. John Chrysostom says that Jesus addresses all who come to receive the holy Eucharist, saying: "I wished to become your brother, and hence I assumed human nature, and I give you back all I united myself to;" and hence St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "And the bread which we break is the communion of the body of the Lord."[1] He wishes here to express by the word communion a more than ordinary union, and to make us understand by that expression that He makes a most intimate and close union with His faithful in the holy Eucharist; and so great is this union that we become not only participators of His graces, as in the other sacraments, but we become His body, and make but one bread and one body with Him; and, therefore, St. John Chrysostom says: "As the Eucharistic bread becomes the body of Jesus, so, too, the faithful who communicate become His body." The holy fathers say that this union is so close and intimate, that there is a holy mingling of the flesh, and blood, and divinity of Jesus with those who communicate with proper dispositions; and hence, my adorable Jesus, there is a reciprocal communion between you and us in the holy Eucharist. I communicate to you, and you to me. I receive you as my bread, and you receive me as your nourishment, except that I do not change you into myself, but by your omnipotent power you change me into yourself; and hence St. John Chrysostom says: "Those who ardently love, desire to be with each other;" and this is the way Christ loves us in the adorable Eucharist. He loves His own, and loves them to excess, because He gives not only Himself in the holy communion, but His glory as well; and hence He says to His Father: "The glory which thou hast given to me, I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one."[2] What is this glory which He says he gave us? It is that we may be the Son of God with Him, the Word, the splendour of His glory, the impress of His substance, His consubstantial image, and all He has, to make us one with Him, as He is one with His Father. Was ever a union more close, more intimate, more holy and incomprehensible than this? Jesus, as a loving King, enters into our hearts, and fills our souls with the splendours of His glory and the riches of His graces. He enters to reign in them and to bridle all our passions. He enters as a priest

[1] 1 Cor. x. 16. [2] John, xvii. 22.

into the sanctuary, to bless, to consecrate, and to offer us to His Father. He comes to us as God and man to apply His merits to us, and as God to exalt our souls so high as to impress upon them the traits of His divinity. He enters into us as the image of the invisible God, to obliterate the impressions of the old man, and to leave instead the impress of the new man, and hence we communicate in all the mysteries of Jesus, and in everything He is and has, and, in a certain sense, we are transformed into Him. All we have said in the foregoing clearly demonstrates that the union which we have with Christ in the holy Eucharist is the most intimate man could have on earth with God, and proves also that this union communicates an ineffable sanctity to the souls of the recipients.

The body also of the communicant receives a very special participation in this sanctity of the soul, and this participation means—1st. That our bodies are sanctified and consecrated to God in a more particular manner by this sacrament than by any of the other sacraments, because our bodies become the temples of the Holy Ghost on account of Jesus really dwelling in them, and because He diffuses over our external senses a power and grandeur of such admirable holiness that we are almost irresistibly compelled to employ them in uses holy and becoming this most holy sacrament. This is the reason why the holy fathers used to say to communicants: How could a tongue purpled with the blood of Jesus speak blasphemies, slanders, falsehood, filthy words, and utter profane songs? How could a mouth sanctified with the body of Jesus sully itself by excesses in eating and drinking? How could eyes which had the privilege to behold these holy mysteries so degrade themselves as to look upon dangerous objects? How could ears which so often heard those divine words: "This is my body," listen to profane discourses and double-meaning words? How could feet which approach so near the holy of holies be present at spectacles where maxims were openly ventilated and approved, contrary to the holy gospel?

Therefore, we must always remember that, after our holy communion, we should glorify God in our bodies by modesty and holy actions, by making them follow justice and not iniquity, and offering them to God as holy, living, and agreeable sacrifices. 2nd. The holy communion gives that germ of immortality and incorruption to the body which Christ promised it shall have fully developed on the general resurrection day, and this promise is sealed by the body of the risen Jesus which we receive in the holy communion, and which the Church calls the *pledge of future glory*, and many holy fathers

say it is the same which Jesus wished to intimate when He said: "He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever, and him shall I raise up on the last day."[1]

What is the second effect produced in those who receive the holy communion with proper dispositions?

It makes them live the life of Jesus. We will now explain this great truth which Christ Himself has taught. The Eucharist does not give the beginning of a new and spiritual life, such as baptism or penance does, nor does it bring us from a state of mortal sin into a new life, because it is a sacrament for the living; but it gives a life more perfect and abundant than any of the other sacraments; and hence Christ said: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me."[2] The eternal Father communicated His life to His Son in the Trinity, and the Son, by His incarnation, communicated the life He received from His Father, in His Father, and for His Father, to our human nature; and when Jesus gives Himself to us in the holy communion, He gives us the life He received from His Father, and hence a Christian, after communion, lives only through Christ, and for Him, and in Him; and hence he could say with St. Paul to the Galatians: "I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me."[3] That is, whether I desire, or love, or speak, or suffer, or act, or whatsoever else I do, I do all through the impressions made on me by Jesus, and by the movements of His holy grace. Ah, how holy and sublime is this life of Jesus in the Christian! But we shall explain more in detail how Christ makes us live His life when we consider the effects of the holy communion on the souls of those who receive it with befitting dispositions. According to the explanation of St. Hilary, Jesus is represented by the little leaven which the woman mixed with three measures of flour, and thus leavened the entire into one dough. The woman is a figure of the ministers of the Church, who give us Jesus in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, in order that our souls and bodies may receive the dispositions, the sanctity, and the life of that living bread, and in order that our souls may be vivified by His spirit, our hearts sanctified by His heart, and our bodies consecrated by His adorable flesh.

How can we know that the holy communion produces those admirable effects in us?

We know that Christ remains in us and we in Him, because—1st. We remain in His love, and hence St. John says: "God is love,

[1] John, vi. 52, 55. [2] John, vi. 58. [3] Gal. ii. 20.

and he that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him ;"[1] and, therefore, if we wish to know that we abide in Jesus, we must feel that we abide in His love, that we are devotedly attached to His service, that we fulfil exactly all His precepts, and all the obligations of our faith, that we always fly from the occasions of sin, and that we fight constantly against our passions. The great effect of this sacrament is to destroy our passions, and to make us produce fruits of all kinds of good works; and hence Christ says: "He that abideth in me and I in him shall bear much fruit."[2] Jesus comes into our hearts through the holy Eucharist, as a divine seed which will produce abundant fruit conformable to His sanctity, His charity, and His humility. But, alas! how few hearts are so prepared that those fruits will be visible in them. This divine bread is often received by persons walking on the broad road, and hence it is trampled under foot and produces no good fruit; this divine seed sometimes falls upon hearts full of rocks and stones, which obstruct and stunt its growth; and sometimes it falls amongst weeds, or the riches and pleasures of this life, which check its growth and prevent it from coming to maturity.

The second sign that Jesus dwells in us and we in Him is mentioned in the first epistle of St. John, which says: "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked ;"[3] and hence all our actions and entire conduct must be conformable to those of Jesus.

3rd. If we communicated with proper dispositions, we would live the life of Christ, because the great design which He had in giving Himself to us was to perpetuate in His children the life He led upon earth, so that when others would see His members they would be forced to exclaim: The life of Christ is manifest in His children. Therefore we should see in the children of Jesus the mortified and interior life which He lived. We should see in them His spirit of sacrifice, His spirit of poverty, and his profound humility; for as the meats we eat convey to our bodies the qualities they possess, so, too, this celestial bread which we receive in the holy Eucharist should make the sanctity and the dispositions of Jesus manifest in our souls.

Is the crime of those who receive the holy sacrament unworthily a very great sin? It bears a most special mark of malice and enormity, because it is a most horrible sacrilege and a crime so daring and so great as to attack the very person of Jesus Christ Himself, the author of all sanctity and goodness; because it renders all the

[1] 1 Ep. iv. 16. [2] John, xv. 5. [3] 1 Ep. ii. 6.

mysteries of Christ, of which this is a renewal and an epitome, useless to him who profaned it; because his sacrilege is opposed to the designs of the Son of God, who instituted this sacrament in order to dwell in the hearts of those purified by penance; because when he receives unworthily, he does all he can to make a shameful alliance between Jesus and Belial, whose slave and victim he is; and because he strives to unite the sin of hell to the sanctity of God, and the light of heaven to the darkness of the damned. Oh, what an injury this criminal profaner endeavours to inflict upon the amiable Son of God, and what an accumulation of ingratitude he returns for the infinite love of his merciful Saviour; and hence St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Whosoever shall eat of this bread or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."[1] St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, and St. John Chrysostom, when explaining these words of St. Paul, say that those who communicate unworthily murder Jesus a second time, and treat Him with as much ignominy and opprobrium as the Jews did at Jerusalem and upon the hill of Calvary.

Those who approach the table of the Lord with hearts filled with avarice represent Judas, who betrayed his Saviour for thirty pieces of silver, because they pretend to be His friends while they prefer their gold before Him; those who curse and swear are the Peters who denied Him; and wicked Catholics are His false accusers; the great ones of this world, so full of pride and ambition, are the Herods who despise Him in His poor, in His doctrine, and in His life; those hypocrites so full of envy, deception, and all kinds of sin, are the Pharisees who could not endure Him; men of fashion and worldly women place a crown of thorns on His sacred head; persons addicted to impurity are the executioners who lacerated His adorable body; and ignorant and badly instructed Christians are the Jewish rabble that cried: Away with Him! crucify Him, crucify Him! And hence we see that all those who communicate unworthily renew again all the painful sufferings and humiliations of our Redeemer's passion. Never was Jesus half so humbled, so outraged, and so mercilessly treated as He is by the unworthy communicant. We tremble with horror when we hear that the tabernacle had been broken, and that the consecrated particles had been scattered on the floor of the sanctuary; we regard such an act as the most revolting of crimes; we close up our houses opposite to where the crime had been committed, and we would not approach the scene of the sacrilege until the reparation was made and the anger

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 27.

of God appeased. When Heliodorus was sent to pillage the treasury of the temple, all the people were in a terrible consternation over the intended profanation; and when we see, in the shape of sacrilegious communicants, troops of robbers plundering the treasury of the Church, and taking away the body of the Lord, we ought to manifest at least as much anguish at their conduct as the Jews did at that of Heliodorus. How would we feel, and what would we say, if we saw the consecrated host cast upon the ground for dogs to devour? Is not this the very thing that happens when a priest, without his knowledge, gives the holy communion to those unworthy to receive it? For when those persons relapse into the sins they lately repented and confessed in the tribunal of penance, they are dumb dogs returning to the vomit. Conceive, if you can, how cruelly the unworthy communicant treats Jesus in the adorable Eucharist; conceive, if you can, the fearful enormity of his crime, because he could do nothing which could mark so significantly the little faith he possesses than the contempt he shows for Jesus in the holy Eucharist.

What should be our grief and sorrow at the recollection of such an outrageous profanation, we to whom the Lord has been pleased to give feelings of love and respect for this most holy mystery; and hence when Mathathias saw the crimes which nations committed in the holy city and the temple, he cried out: "Behold our sanctuary, and our beauty, and our glory is laid waste, and the Gentiles have defiled them; to what end, then, shall we live any longer? And Mathathias and his sons rent their garments, and they covered themselves with haircloth, and made great lamentations."[1] Jesus, in the holy Eucharist, is the most holy, the most beautiful, and the grandest object we have in religion; and hence the unfortunate Christians who profane it must be supremely more culpable than the Gentiles who profaned the temple of Solomon. Oh, how great is our crime and insensibility in treating, and suffering Jesus to be treated, in this cruel manner! St. Paul makes us comprehend the still greater enormity of the unworthy communicant's crime, when he says that "he eats his own condemnation," that is, he deserves by his sacrilege eternal damnation; and only for the great mercy of God, his sentence would be consummated forthwith after his crime. He eats his own condemnation because he contemptuously receives Him who is to judge him; and he receives the subject of his condemnation, because the love of Jesus in this most holy sacrament will be the point on which sinners and the profaners of His body

[1] 1 Mach. ii. 12, 13, 14.

will be judged and condemned, if they should unfortunately die in that state.

Therefore, those sacrilegeous communicants should forthwith begin to ward off the terrible sentence hanging over them, by abundant tears and sincere sorrow at the very altar where the victim of reconciliation is offered up, and where they found condemnation and death, instead of life and sanctification. St. Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, says that "many amongst them are infirm and weak,"[1] because they profane the body of the Lord. How happy it would be for such people if God inflicted corporal punishments on them in order to recall them to repentance; but He inflicts invisible punishments much more terrible instead, such as a withdrawal of His graces, insensibility about the affairs of salvation, a hardness of heart, and death in the midst of sin. Why have so many kingdoms and empires once Catholic become seats of infidelity and irreligion? Why have so many noble churches been changed into mosques and heretical temples? Why have Christ and His holy faith fled from so many nations? Because those kingdoms and nations have trampled on God's graces, and profaned the greatest of all His graces—the adorable Eucharist. When we see the same crimes committed in the holy places, we must expect the same visitations, and faith may be withdrawn from us if we do not employ it as we ought, and first, and above all, in everything that concerns the adoration and reception of the holy Eucharist.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, OUR BREAD.

My Saviour, Jesus Christ, I adore you, the living bread and spiritual nourishment of all created souls. The angels in heaven nourish themselves by contemplating and loving you as the Word, the Son of God, the truth, the life, and the light of all creation. O my Saviour, how good and how loving you acted when you descended from heaven, and became man for the spiritual food of our souls! You were not satisfied to give us a being and an existence, and to make us new creatures by the infusion of your grace; but you should feed, and fortify, and preserve this new being and existence by giving us yourself. The best way to eat of this, dear Lord, is to believe in you and to love you, to keep your faith dwelling in us, and to meditate with a lively devotion on your glorious mysteries; because your divine word brings your truth, your spirit, and your merits into our

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 30.

souls. O my divine Jesus, these are not the only ways you desire to feed and to nourish our souls, because you discovered, in giving us the adorable Eucharist, another means much more admirable and more worthy of your love; and because you gave us your flesh, and blood, and your divinity, under the appearance of bread and wine. O adorable bread which contains the only Son of the Father, and the only impress of His substance—He who made all things, in whom all things subsist, and in whom the Father hath placed the plenitude of grace, of truth, of glory, and of the divinity.

O living bread that contains the principle of all sanctity, and all the mysteries of the life of Jesus, and which is the consummation, the accomplishment, and the fulfilment of all the figures, and where man is nourished with the God who created and redeemed him. O my God, how unfortunate have I been when I separated myself from you, and absented myself from your holy house, where I could gather up blessings in abundance. I went into a far-off land, where I fell into extreme want, and fed upon the husks of swine, which increased my hunger instead of appeasing it. Alas! now I know that those perishable goods and criminal pleasures, which the devil and the world give to their slaves and lovers, are nothing more than poisoned meats, which kill the soul instead of sustaining her. It is at your table only, my divine Saviour, that the solid bread is found which can satisfy all the desires of my heart and soul; there we find the wheat of the elect, and that sacred wine which makes those who receive it virgins, and their souls pure and innocent and prolific in good works. My soul is parched and in a state of extreme languor, because I neglected to approach your holy table. I received this adorable bread while afflicted with a terrible blindness and plunged in the love of worldly things; I received it while stripped of my nuptial robes, and before I expiated my crimes, by long and laborious penances, proportioned to my wicked career; I received this bread of life in a state of sin, and instead of finding your adorable life I found a terrible death and a deep damnation. O my dear Saviour, never permit so fearful a misfortune to befal me again, and grant that I may weep through my whole life the profanation I did to your body, your blood, and your divinity. You tell us, dear Jesus, that holy things are for the just, and not for dogs. Grant me this sanctity so necessary, purify my soul and invest it with your merits and virtues; grant that I will always approach your holy table with a contrite and humble heart; grant me the fruits of true penance, a lively faith, a firm hope, and an ardent love for you, my adorable Jesus.

Penetrate my heart and soul with a knowledge of the sanctity and grandeur of your holy sacrament; and when you have given me those holy dispositions, come then and fix upon my soul the impress of your own divine self. Operate in my heart the admirable effects you work in the hearts of your well-prepared servants, so that your soul may sanctify my soul, and your heart purify my heart; that as you live the life of your Father I may live your life; that you may abide in me and I in you, in order that I may be one with you as you are one with your Father; that your divinity may transform me into you; that your body may consecrate my body, and make it like yours, a living, a holy, and agreeable sacrifice to God; and that all my senses may share in the sanctity and the purity of your adorable body. Oh, how happy, a thousand times happy, are those souls who are so dead to this world, and who live so holily as to be able to receive this divine sacrament every day; who are always hungering for this celestial food, and are never unhappy but when deprived of it; because you, my dear Jesus, are their consolation and their comfort. When we approach to you, dear Redeemer, in this holy sacrament, we arise forthwith from our lowliness, and we are comforted in our afflictions; we feel this life a dreary desert, and your cross becomes sweet and agreeable to us, and your humiliations are our boast and our glory. With you we perform all our actions peacefully and with a holy ardour; with you we succesfully combat and overcome all our enemies; with you we despise this world and all its sinful pleasures; and with you we will die with joy, and appear with confidence before your heavenly tribunal.

By the power and efficacy of your body, as a great and learned saint said, our bodies cease, in a certain sense, to be dust and ashes; that we are no longer captives, but freedmen in Christ; and it is this divine body of yours, dear Lord, that fills us with the firm hope of one day entering your eternal dwelling-place, to enjoy for eternity all the goods and blessings reserved there for all who love you. Amen.

CHAPTER XXII.

ON JESUS CHRIST, THE LIGHT OF MANKIND.

JESUS as the Son of God, the divine Word, the same wisdom as His Father and the splendour of His glory, is the eternal and substantial light that "enlightens every man that cometh into this world,"[1] because no created spirit could think, reason, or distinguish truth from falsehood or good from evil but by the light which is communicated to him by this eternal and immutable light which He diffuses over our souls; and as the Son of God made man, He is likewise the light of all men, because He was sent to enlighten them by His Father and to draw them out of the darkness into which sin had plunged them. Before the coming of the Son of God, mankind, with a few exceptions, was driven from God's presence as far as His omnipotent hand could cast them, because they dwelt in the obscure night of sin, and were enveloped in its impenetrable darkness. Before God created the light, this earth was a boundless void, and darkness mantled the great surface of the abyss; but when He commanded the light of day to shine, then the grand machinery of the heavens and all the teeming beauties of this earth became visible.

Mankind knew very imperfectly the difference between good and evil, and hence could only judge of the things on this earth through an obscured intellect; but Jesus appeared, the sun of justice arose, and forthwith this darkness was dissipated, and as St. Matthew says: "The people that sat in darkness hath seen great light, and to them that sat in the region of the shadow of death light is sprung up,"[2] and then men saw what was before hidden and unknown to them.

There is no truth better established in the Sacred Scriptures than this, and Christ Himself taught it when He said: "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but he shall have the light of life;"[3] and again He says: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."[4] Jesus is the light of men—1st. Because He enlightens the spirit to know what to do and what to avoid. 2nd. He is the light of faith, because He said: "Believe in the light that you may become children of the light."[5] Faith is the grand medium through which God enlightens our hearts, because after we sin our souls are like expiring lamps, which the eternal light illumines by means of faith. 3rd. The divine Word of Jesus is our light, and like an inflamed torch always shines upon our pathway,

[1] John, i. 9. [2] John, iv. 16. [3] John, viii. 12.
[4] John, ix. 5. [5] John, xii. 36.

and hence the prophet David says: "By what doth a young man correct his ways? by observing thy words."[1] 4th. He is our light by the example of His holy life which He bequeathed to us, and which should be our model if we wish not to go astray; and He enlightens us through the lives of those Christians whose virtues and good works are so many emanations from Jesus dwelling within them. How, therefore, can we keep our eyes always shut against so many lights shining upon them, and how can we, in those circumstances, keep them open to error and illusion, which conduct us into the ways of iniquity, death, and eternal darkness? In order, therefore, to avoid those evils we will consider in this chapter—1st. What benefit does this divine light procure for us. 2nd. What we owe to this light. 3rd. Who are those who do not follow it. 4th. What are the consequences of that darkness in which sinners live who do not follow this divine light?

What are the benefits which Jesus, as our light, procures for us?

This light procures many most considerable benefits for us. 1st. When God designed to create a new world, a new earth, and new creatures, He drew man from the nothingness of sin to form a spiritual world, and He gave it a Sun to enlighten it, just as He gave a sun to enlighten this earth. Jesus is this Sun of Justice to the souls of all in this new world, because He gave them a knowledge of truths hidden and unknown to them before; He gave them a knowledge of the power and glory of the Supreme Being, a view of the grandeur of the world to come, and of the duties of man to God and to his neighbour. He made them comprehend the malice and the nothingness of this world, the corruption of the human heart, the operations of grace, and the necessity of a liberator. This divine light made us understand the truth or falsehood of everything we could see or conceive, and of everything we could love or desire, and it makes us comprehend things as they really are, and in the way we ought to understand them.

2nd. It makes us know the grandeur and the sanctity of God, and the misery and nothingness of man. It shows us His grandeur by manifesting His omnipotence in all His works—in the creation of the universe, in the preservation of all things, in His care and protection of His people, in the terrible punishments He inflicted upon His enemies, and in the great work of man's redemption. This light shows us His sanctity by the infinite hatred He has for sin, and by the purity we must have to approach Him; and it makes us know the

[1] Psalms, cxviii. 9.

misery and the nothingness of man by discovering man's corruption to us, the necessity he had of grace and a Redeemer, his inclination to evil, his natural dislike for the virtues he ought to practise, and his impotence to know or fulfil his obligations by himself; and, finally, this light shows man that he carries within him the seed of his own sinful misfortunes.

3rd. This light makes us know the solidity of eternal goods, their duration, their power to fill up the heart of man, and the baseness, the instability, and the weakness of all temporal things, and it likewise teaches that we ought to fear eternal evils only, and to love eternal goods alone.

4th. It exposes the fallacy of the amusements and pleasures of this world, and the sweets and enjoyments to be found in the service of God, and in those things which we hope to possess in the kingdom of heaven.

5th. This divine light makes us see the foulness and deformity of sin, the beauty and tranquillity of virtue, all that can make man happy and all that can make him miserable, the dangers of prosperity, of high life, great wealth, and temporal honours, and the advantages of adversity, afflictions, poverty, and an humble state.

6th. This light makes our duties to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbour, clear as day, and makes each of us know his state and vocation of life. If kings make use of this light, they will see that they ought to utilise their power and authority in extending the kingdom of Christ, and destroying that of the devil; and it teaches princes, judges, and governors what they ought to do for the maintenance of public peace and order, and how to defend the just and the innocent from the oppression of their enemies. It teaches bishops and pastors all the obligations of their vocation, and how to discharge them in a manner pleasing to God, whose ministers they are; and it teaches parents and children, masters and servants, and all mankind, how to fulfil their duties to God and to their own salvation. This Sun of Justice has come to enlighten all men, and yet all are not enlightened, because millions fly from it and prefer darkness; and hence comes error and wanderings away from the truth. We do not examine things by the light of this uncreated instructor, because we generally judge things according to our passions: and if certain objects flatter those passions, we approve of them; and if those objects be opposed to our passions, we reject them; because we judge of things concerning ourselves by self-interest; and hence self-love is the blind judge that decides our cause. We generally judge of things

according to the prejudices of infancy, or according to custom, or the way in which the world reasons and judges of them. How could such judges give us any other than a false judgment of the things of this world; and we can see all this if we put this opinion before a tribunal able to undeceive us, and capable of enlightening our darkness; and then we will wonder at our folly in following those blind guides who have no true idea of the things they judge. We call that bad which is good, we call light darkness and darkness light, and we call down upon ourselves the maledictions God has pronounced upon all who give such false judgments; and hence we should continually consult this divine light which will enlighten the heart and soul of him who seeks and loves it.

All the creatures of this universe are nothing to Jesus, our eternal light, but an extraction from nothingness by His omnipotent word, to make known His majesty, His wisdom, His goodness, and to form His great mystic body and the several bodies composing it. This divine light enables us to see that all created things are no more than a grain of sand, and almost nothing before God; that they are for man's use, and should never be made to serve his irregular desires, and should be used for his necessities only; that he should not make them his last end, but a means to bring him to God, who is the beginning and the end of all things. This light shows us that this world is not our eternal dwelling-place, but a place of exile, where we should act as strangers continually travelling towards our heavenly country; it tells us that all the grandeur and beauty of the heavens, the sun, and moon, and stars, all the other works of creation, are nothing more than indistinct and unfinished pictures of Him who created them; and that all we see in this visible world is a mere outline of the world to come. In a word, this divine light teaches that we ought to be as elevated above the things of this world as the stars that shine in an obscure sky; that we ought to follow with fidelity the way Providence has marked out for us; that we ought to remain in the place He has fixed us; that we ought to be the field He cultivates, the edifice He has built, the temple in which He wishes to dwell, trees bearing good fruit, and vine branches attached to the stem, Jesus Christ. This divine light shows us the ocean sometimes tranquil, and thus picturing the majestic grandeur of God; sometimes agitated, and thus picturing His anger; and sometimes it shows us this world agitated by many temptations and as if stricken by so many tempests. The rivers, streams, and rivulets represent, as they flow along to the ocean, how all things pass away, and how

life is swallowed up in eternity; the rocks represent the obduracy and insensibility of our hearts against the calls and inspirations of God's grace; and the deserts and arid places are a picture of souls deprived of the sun of justice and the dews of His heavenly love; and all of them combined speak in their silent splendours something for our instruction. This divine light of Jesus makes us see how all creatures are the instruments of God's justice or His mercy, and how He makes use of them to execute His designs.

Thunders, lightnings, tempests, and storms, should make us respect and fear God's omnipotent justice; they should call to our memory the thrilling grandeurs of Mount Sinai at the giving of the ten commandments to Moses, and the terrible events which are to usher in and carry into execution the coming vengeance of Jesus on the day of general judgment. All the seasons likewise speak to us of God; nature, which seems to have expired in the winter time, is a figure of the hidden and holy lives of the just; but in the spring time, the day of general judgment, they will arise and appear in all their dazzling beauties; and the harvest-time should remind us that we shall surely reap what we have sown, and that if we sow in the flesh we shall reap ignominy and corruption, and if we sow in the spirit we shall gather never-fading glory. War and peace, scarcity and abundance, are also sources of instruction for us, because we learn from them how God uses them to punish us for our sins, or to reward us for our virtues. All the armies of this world belong to Him, and He can give victory to whom He pleases. He makes His justice or His mercy manifest everywhere, and hence there is no object, however insignificant, which cannot instruct us. Light and darkness, day and night, represent us in the state of grace or of mortal sin. Finally, we can see God in all His creatures by means of this light; we can see Him operating everywhere throughout the universe, preserving all creatures by His providence, and performing in them and through them whatever He wishes in the heavens or upon the earth.

If we see a man exalted to great dignity in the Church or the world, and if we judge him by the divine light of Jesus, we will see him invested with no power or authority which he has not from God and to be used according to His wishes and intentions, and never to gratify such a man's ambition, his worldly pomp, or the desires of his corrupt heart. Through this divine light we will see this man exposed to the greatest dangers for his salvation, and to temptations very difficult to overcome; and when he is fallen from his grandeur, we see that he

has less obstacles to his salvation in that state than when he was rich and exalted; that he is now much disposed to receive the gospel truths, and consequently more conformable to the life of Jesus; that he has less means to gratify the cravings of his passions, and that his life is full of crosses, humiliations, and penance, as the gospel commands. All the grandeur, the vanities, and the pleasures of this world, are no more before this divine light than a dream, a puff of smoke, or a withered flower. Through this divine light we can understand the difference between true and false piety, that there is no true or solid virtue but what comes from faith and charity in Jesus, that what appears to be virtue is not it by any means, that pride and hypocrisy often appear in the garb of humility and modesty, that what we sometimes call patience and meekness are not the effects of grace, but of a natural temperament, and that what often appears grand before man is an abomination before God.

1st. If we have the happiness to belong to Jesus, we should faithfully follow Him, and constantly walk after Him as that living and eternal light which will conduct us to the source of all light; because it will not suffice to be enlightened, but we must walk in the light as well; and hence St. John says in his first epistle: "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as He also is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."[1] This light which St. John speaks of is no other than the truth of God, His sanctity, His justice, His eternal law, His mercy, and His word; and hence we ought to live in God Himself by charity, and then we will see all things as He sees Himself in His own divine light. If we wish to have fellowship with God, we ought to walk in this light and to live according to faith, and to conduct ourselves as children of God who work not deeds of darkness, but who serve the Lord by goodness, truth, and justice, which are the fruits of this divine light. We contract a fellowship with God, the eternal light, through those virtues, because they unite us to Jesus, through whom the Father communicates His gifts to us, and with whom we adore and glorify that Father in a manner befitting His supreme being.

2nd. We owe still more to Jesus, our light; because, as we are children of the light and not of the night, we should not sleep like those who are not enlightened by the gospel, but we should watch and guard ourselves with spiritual vigilance; and hence St. Paul says to the Thessalonians: "Those that sleep, sleep in the night; and

[1] 1 Ep. i. 5, 6, 7.

they that are drunk, are drunk during the night."[1] This sleep is criminal, because it consists in a profound forgetfulness of God, His faith, His benefits, His threats, His promises, and in an extreme neglect of our duties, all of which we must neglect if we live an effeminate life, and if we do no violence to our inclinations. Spiritual intoxication is not less criminal, because it springs from our too great attachment to the things of this world, or from the excessive use we make of the pleasures and grandeur of the age we live in; excesses which deprive us of faith and the light of grace; excesses opposed to a Christian life, which consists in a moderate use of created things; excesses which make us forget God and our religious duties; and hence we, the children of God, should guard ourselves against this spiritual drowsiness and intoxication; and St. Paul in his first epistle to the Thessalonians endorses this doctrine when he says: "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, having on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation."[2] Faith will make known to us the illusions of present things and the solidity of the things to come, humble hope makes us expect the eternal goods, and charity makes us merit and possess them.

Nothing can be more surprising than to see Christians sleeping, although Christ, the Sun of Justice, has appeared in the world, and the light of His Gospel shines over the entire earth; and, notwithstanding all this, millions are buried in a profound sleep; they pass their lives in agreeable dreams, and whilst they grow in wealth and power they see the truth and virtues of the gospel like so many phantoms, which alarm them only for an instant. Therefore, let us awake whilst we have life and whilst the sun still shines upon us; we must not put it off until death comes upon us, when the sun will be obscured, and the moon will give us no more light; and hence the prophet Isaias says: "Arise, Jerusalem, and receive the light."[3] That is, arise, Christian soul, from that bed of death on which you tranquilly repose amidst the darkness you love so well, and receive the divine light which will make you shine with glory before God and His saints. Your Jesus has come upon this earth to enlighten you, and is still your light and life—arise and come. The glory of the Lord shone over you at baptism, where you were invested with sanctifying grace, and this same grace comes now to glorify you, and to deliver you from the shame and ignominy of sin. Darkness covers the whole earth, and night, like a funeral-pall, envelops all her people. Now is the time for all who have not known Jesus;

[1] 1 Thess. v. 7. [2] 1 Thess. v. 8. [3] Isaias, lx. 1

but at the hour of death He will come in a terrible manner, when all who refused to follow Him, and all who would not open their eyes to His divine light, will be cast into everlasting darkness. Therefore, let us take warning from the calamities inflicted upon so many other nations, and let us come forth from the darkness into the light of God's grace and love. Oh, how ungrateful we shall appear, and how miserable shall be our lot if, while dwelling in the Church, and encompassed with this hallowed light, we shut our eyes against it, if we love the darkness more than the light, and if, instead of following it, we shut out every ray of it, and hide ourselves in the darkness of our crimes and of our passions.

Are there many who do not follow this divine light and who are still entombed in darkness?

The number is alarmingly great, because all sinners are in that sad state, and their darkness is the more profound and impenetrable as they are distant from truth and separated from God, such as pagans, infidels, and Jews. Consider the terrible darkness which envelops the millions of infidels, pagans, and idolators who know not God all over the world, who adore the works of their own hands as God's, who know no other life than the present, and who live only by the rule of their senses and their passions; and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "God delivered them up to a reprobate sense to do those things which are not convenient."[1] St. Paul, in his epistle to the Ephesians, gives a fearful account of the appalling blindness of those idolatrous unfortunates when he says: "Walk not as also the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts, who despairing have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness, unto covetousness."[2]

2nd. And although the Jews have the Sacred Scriptures and read them, still they are buried in impenetrable darkness, because St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "But even until this day when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart; but when they shall be converted to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away;"[3] and he says to the Romans: "God hath given them the spirit of insensibility, eyes that they shall not see, and ears that they shall not hear, until this present day;" "that blindness has happened in part in Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in."[4]

3rd. Heretics are in this awful darkness, because they see and

[1] Rom. i. 28. [2] Ephes. iv. 17, 18, 19. [3] 2 Cor. iii. 15, 16. [4] Rom. xi. 8, 25.

will not understand, and through pride they ignore all others; they resist the light which enlightens Christ's Church, and they condemn her children and all who seek from her the truth of which she is the custodian.

4th. And St. Paul tells the Ephesians that worldlings are in this darkness when he says: "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places."[1]

What is the cause of that darkness in which so many millions live?

It originates from many sources—1st. There are some who voluntarily love this darkness, because they do not wish to know the truth, and because they hate the light lest they would see their defects, and thus suffer the reproaches of conscience. They commit evil without remorse, because they do not want to know what is bad in order to rest undisturbed in the gratification of their passions; and hence our Redeemer says: "Every one that doth evil hateth the light, that his works may not be reproved,"[2] and St. Augustine says: "The love of sin makes truth odious and disagreeable." They reject this divine light and fly from it, and even persecute it, and do all they can to extinguish and annihilate it; but true children of the light find no joy so great as in the knowledge of truth and in testing all their actions and marching in this light, and, so far from dreading to see and to know too much of God's love and sanctity, they are ever solicitous to possess them, lest they might be surprised by the darkness and illusions of their own will.

2nd. This darkness originates also from our passions, because the moment we abandon ourselves to them they harass the soul, and so disturb her peace and serenity that she becomes forthwith a cave of clouds and whirlwinds, and hence she cannot see things as they really are, nor the terrible consequences to which they impel her. Avarice had so blinded Judas that he could not see or remember the blessings he received from his Saviour; he could not foresee the injustice he was going to commit, nor the terrible sufferings and death he was about to bring down upon his divine Master. Ambition had so darkened the understanding of Nebuchodonosor that he demanded to be adored as a God; and so impenetrable is the darkness into which the infamous vice of impurity leads us, that holy David never saw the degradation of his fallen state for an entire year;

[1] Ephes. vi. 12. [2] John, iii. 20.

and the darkness which encompassed the abominable inhabitants of Sodom, who desired to do violence on the strangers dwelling with Lot, was a figure of the blindness which enveloped their souls. What is the cause of all the crimes reigning amongst the rich? They generally originate from one passion which those people allow to rule them, they desire to cherish this passion without fear or remorse, and when they find that they cannot stifle one or the other they renounce the faith and deliver themselves up to crime and impiety of every kind. This is the way the pagan Philistines were blinded, because as St. Paul says to the Romans: "They became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened,"[1] and so much so that they did not know God, nor the creatures they adored as God; and hence they rushed into every corruption of mind and body, so that one crime became the stepping-stone to another more enormous, and that latter one to another still greater. We are surprised at those pagan excesses, and can contemplate them only with horror; and yet if we follow our passions, they will bring us to a similar destiny, because when we stifle the light of the gospel we will abandon ourselves to all the horrible diseases of the heart. It oftens happens, also, that when the heart is once corrupted, and that the passions are in the ascendant, we strive to justify those actions most opposed to the light of faith, and we wish to have persons to endorse and approve the disorderly lives we lead.

3rd. God Himself is another cause of this darkness of spirit, but in order to understand this dangerous-looking expression we must remember that there is a darkness of sin, a darkness of the origin of sin, and a darkness of the punishment of sin. The darkness of sin is when we are ignorant of the principal mysteries of faith, the commandments of God, and the essential duties of our vocation, which we are obliged to know; but this ignorance is not only a sin, but it is the fruitful source of countless other sins, because from this corrupt source come blasphemies, the most absurd superstitions, and a thousand other abominations contrary to God's holy worship. When kings, princes, and other rulers are ignorant of their obligations, crime and public disorder become rampant throughout the cities, towns, and rural districts under their command. Ignorance in judges is another great cause of sin, because very many injustices originate from it, and their unjust sentences cause the ruin of many families, despair, vengeance, mutual animosities, and a thousand other sins; and, in addition, those who gained through the false judgment and

[1] Rom. i. 21.

ignorance of the judge or advocate, seldom repair the injury done to the neighbour. Fathers and mothers also are guilty of countless sins through ignorance of the duties of their state, because through their ignorance their children are ignorant, and hence they are vicious, abandoned to their passions, independent of paternal authority and control, and addicted to all kinds of vice; and from this state of affairs spring a thousand violations of the precepts of the Church and the commands of the gospel. Much crime comes also from the ignorance of those worldlings who spread sin broadcast around them by their scandals, their luxury, their immodesties, their bad discourses, and their wicked example.

God inflicts another species of darkness or punishment for sin on those who abuse His grace, and reject the light he offers them, and hence they do not wish to know or to see the truth which could save them, because they prefer to live in their darkness, and, as a consequence, God deprives them of the light, leaves them in their blindness, and abandons them in their evil dispositions, and then they fall into a wilful impotency to receive truth, and to return from their wanderings; and hence St. John says: "God hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart and be converted."[1] This is the blindness which is the punishment of sin, and of the resistance we make against the light—a blindness which all mortal sin merits, and which every sinner ought to fear. Sometimes God punishes the sinner for one special sin, and if He do not punish all with a special blindness for each, we have to thank His goodness and mercy. This blindness has different degrees—1st. When we do not correspond with the truths necessary for our guidance. 2nd. When we are not moved by the truths we know, or when we hear and see them with a terrible indifference; and this was Pharoah's state, because he saw and heard all that Moses did and said to him, and he pretended to yield, but his heart was blind and hardened, and he perished in his blindness. Oh, let us humble ourselves under the all-powerful hand of God, and let us adore the depth of His incomprehensible judgments regarding the heart of man.

4th. The fourth cause of our darkness is the devil, and hence St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "And if our gospel be also hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine unto them."[2]

[1] John, xii. 40. [2] 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

Worldlings obey the devil, and pay him the honour due to the true and living God, and in return the devil blinds their souls by taking away the truth from them; he seduces them into a love of worldly things by giving them a picture of the glory, the pleasures, and the riches of kingdoms and empires; and when he has them blinded with the false splendours of those things, they devote themselves to them, and hence turn away their eyes from the true light. The devil is the prince of darkness, he diffuses his darkness over the souls of his slaves, and he treats those over whom he has gained a victory as the Philistines treated Sampson after they became his master; they blinded him by piercing his eyes, then they made a sport of him, and, finally, made him turn a mill-stone like a brute beast.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE LIGHT OF CHRISTIANS.

I adore you, my Jesus, the true light of the world, the splendour of your Father's glory, who enlightens all men that cometh into the world, you are the Sun of Justice who appeared in the plenitude of time to enlighten us; you are the true light that enlightens all created things, and when we live estranged from you we must live in the profound darkness of night, because error, ignorance, and blindness are our inheritance when separated from you, and the more we walk in this unhappy state, the more we diverge from you, and hence we must tumble into newer and profounder precipices. We regard everything falling under our senses as a good to make us happy, because we have been seduced and deceived by the false glitter of present things, by worldly prejudices, and by the feeble light of our corrupt nature, and because we judge of things as they appear to us, and not as they really are. It is time, dear Lord, to arise from our terrible lethargy, and to walk in the uncreated splendour of your divine light, which has already risen above us, and begins to dissipate the darkness encompassing us. All my labours during my night of sin were vain and useless, because I did not know what I did, or why I laboured; and, by a still greater blindness, I did not wish to see the light, nor the dangers which lay everywhere in ambush for me.

I am one of those who love the darkness in preference to the light, and hence you will justly condemn me. This divine light could easily expel my illusions, and deliver me from my errors, if I had the good sense to approach it; but, unfortunately, I fled from it, to pursue my foolish dreams. I feared to see it lest it would waken me from my criminal career. My beloved Saviour, you cured my

soul when you dissipated my blindness; you did to my soul what you did to the man born blind, because you washed me from my iniquities in the waters of baptism and penance—the true waters of Saloe; and, through your grace, I became again a child of day and a follower of the gospel light. Grant, through your great mercy, that I may never again become the abode of darkness, and that I may never again fall into that fatal slumber so dangerous to my spiritual well-being, and which so often, and for so long a time, seduced me by dreams and phantoms of human pleasures and glory. May your holy light be a lamp to shine upon my pathway for the future, and that faith and your holy grace combined may be a brilliant torch to illumine my heart and make me see the sure way to my heavenly country. I feel, my adorable Redeemer, that I still possess a great depth of ignorance and error, and that I will be soon seduced and deceived in my opinions and judgments if you withdraw your light from me. Give me, dear Jesus, your light, that I may always be able to judge by it everything on my journey to eternity, of goods and evils, of humiliations and consolations, of the opinions and sayings of men, of the maxims of this world, of people who are good, of my own lights and those of others, of my thoughts, my intentions, my desires, and my actions, so that I can discover what is dangerous or assured, doubtful or certain, true or false, good or bad in all things.

O true light of life, light never dimmed or changeable, always holy and beautiful to the soul that seeks and loves you; when shall my heart, my soul, and my actions, be entirely illumined by you? When shall that happy day dawn when the most hidden things in this world shall be made manifest; we await this happy hour, and are preparing for it as we walk while the light still shines, and before the darkness could overtake and surprise us. How unhappy those shall be who will be surprised, because the light which was to enlighten them will serve to precipitate them into the caverns of eternal night, and it will light the elect to their thrones of glory, to contemplate you in that light inaccessible where you dwell, and which will constitute the joy and the happiness of the blessed for eternity. O most happy land, in which night shall never appear, and from which darkness is eternally exiled, because the Lamb will be the lamp thereof, and because we will see through this divine light, its origin and its substance, in your unity, my merciful Redeemer, with the adorable Trinity of divine persons. Amen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON JESUS CHRIST, OUR PEACE.

In order to comprehend how Jesus is our peace, we must bear in mind that man, while in a state of innocence, was united and obedient to God, and rejoiced in a repose and tranquillity which nothing could ever disturb. He was in peace with God and with himself, and would be so with the whole world had he persevered in his original justice. But scarcely had he fallen into sin, when he was deprived of all those exalted and heavenly privileges. He became forthwith the enemy of his Creator, and saw God's justice roused against him. He became the victim of a terrible remorse, and was seized by continual fears and alarms, by a crowd of conflicting thoughts, and by a multitude of harassing regrets. All his passions declared war against him, he saw the devil enrolling creatures in battle array against him, and very soon after divisions, quarrels, and wars sprung up in his family.

Peace fled from us when we offended the God of peace, and when we lost this peace we lost our repose and tranquillity, and became enemies to God; and in spite of all those misfortunes we long for peace, and seek it everywhere—from within and without, from joys and from pleasures, but we seek and desire it in vain, because we can find it nowhere but in Jesus; and hence St. Paul says: "He is our peace." Therefore, we will consider in this chapter how Christ is our peace, and we will see—1st. That He is our peace with God. 2nd. That He is our peace with our neighbour. 3rd. That wars, lawsuits, dissensions, quarrels, &c., arise because the peace of Christ is not in us. 4th. That Christ Himself is our internal peace, because He calms our fears, our troubles, and our inquietudes. 5th. That we should not hope to enjoy a perfect peace upon this earth, but only in heaven, where we will be consummated in an eternal union with the God of peace. 6th. We will see that there is a false peace which we ought to fear.

How is Jesus our peace with God? He is our peace with God in many ways. 1st. By the sacrifice of His body and blood which He offered up on the cross. He was the pacific victim who disarmed the just anger of God, and who, says St. Paul to the Ephesians, "destroyed the hostilities"[1] that existed between God and us, because we are able through that peace to approach to Him, and to

[1] Ephes. ii. 16.

receive pardon of our sins; and because He is the victim who gave us access to our offended Creator, who made us His friends by making us just—a blessing which no sacrifice of the Old Law could ever effect; and hence St. Paul says to the Colossians: "And you, whereas you were some time alienated and enemies in mind in evil works, yet now He hath reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unspotted and blameless before Him."[1] His excessive love for us caused Him to offer Himself up to satisfy His Father's anger; and hence the prophet Isaias says: "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we were healed."[2]

2nd. Jesus is our peace with God through all His mysteries, and this is what our Redeemer wished to express when He said, after His resurrection, to His disciples, and in them to all who believe in Him: "Peace be unto you; my peace I give unto you." I have finished the work which my Father gave me to do, because I united my personality to human nature at my incarnation, and I gave the holy kiss of peace to mankind, who was so long expecting me. At my birth I made my angels publish the peace I came to give to the world; and at my death I appeased my Father's anger by, as St. Paul says to the Colossians, "making peace through the blood of the cross, both as to the things that are on earth and the things that are in heaven."[3] At my resurrection I told mankind to have confidence and to be at peace, because I had conquered the world and all their enemies. I sat at the right hand of my Father after my ascension to intercede for man, and to reconcile him to his offended Creator through the merits of my sufferings, which merits I still offer up to Him for them; and after I had sent the Holy Ghost upon my apostles, I sent them over the whole earth to announce the *gospel of peace* to all nations.

3rd. Jesus is our peace with God, because He is the Mediator of that alliance of peace which God had promised to make with man. Alas! where would we all be now if Jesus had not stood between His Father's anger and us? His justice would have crushed us long ago as so many objects of His hatred, because our crimes were continually irritating Him and calling down His vengeance upon us.

4th. Jesus is our peace, and makes our peace with His Father through His ministers, who are the dispensers of His mysteries. He has given them the words of reconciliation, and confided the sacraments to them through which the enemies of God become His true friends,

[1] Coloss. i. 21, 22. [2] Isaias, liii. 5. [3] Coloss. i. 20.

and live in peace with Him, and are united to Him by the graces He communicates through them.

How is Jesus our peace with the neighbour? One of the great designs which the Son of God had in becoming man was to establish peace, concord, union, and charity amongst men, so that they could be one as He is one with His Father. He wishes that we shall be united in one common feeling, and that we shall constitute but one heart, one soul, and one spirit. He unites Jews, Gentiles, and nations the most barbarous and opposed, into one body in His Church, and St. Paul explains this union in a truly attractive and convincing manner in almost all his epistles. He says we are but one man, and that Jesus is our life, that we are only one body of which He is the chief, one house of which He is the father, one edifice or temple of which He is the foundation, one city of which He is the king and master. All these comparisons show us that we are in peace with our neighbour only as long as we are united to Jesus.

1st. We are only one man with Jesus, because St. Paul says to the Ephesians that this divine Saviour "made void the law of commandments contained in decrees,"[1] and He did so "that He might make the two (Jews and Gentiles) in Himself into one new man making peace." If, therefore, we make but one man with Jesus, how can enmities exist between us, since He is our head, our governor, our life, our spirit, and in Him we exist, and from Him we take our light, our nourishment, and our strength?

2nd. And the apostle says in his first epistle to the Corinthians: "For in one spirit were we all baptised unto one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or freedmen, and Jesus is the chief and His Spirit is the soul of this body, into which all the members are united."[2] What charity, sanctity, peace, unity, obedience, and dependence did not this God made man operate in us when He made us one and the same body with Himself; and hence if we be united to our chief and animated with His Spirit, how can we have dissensions, disputes, and divisions in this body, since Jesus is the peace of this body and of each of its members, and hence they cannot be divided, except when separated from their chief?

3rd. This body is only one Jesus, one Son of God, composed of many saints who adore and serve God through Jesus Christ in the same faith, the same hope, and the same worship. All the saints constituting this Christ are chosen in Him and by Him, they are called to the same grace and to the same profession of eternal goods,

[1] Ephes. ii. 15. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 13.

and in Him they are sanctified, because He is their justice and their sanctification, and it is the same grace that makes them all children of God; and hence St. Paul says to the Galatians: "That there is neither Jew, nor Greek, nor slave, nor freedman,"[1] but they are all one in Jesus Christ.

4th. We are all brothers, and Jesus is the head and the Father of this great family. He keeps us in the same house, His Church, where all of us possess the same goods, the same doctrine, and the same bread; where we are seated at the same table, under the eyes of our Father, who gives us the same precepts, all of which are embraced in the precept of paternal charity which should banish from amongst us hatreds, vengeance, lawsuits, and all kinds of acrimony and bitterness.

5th. We are the living stones of that temple or spiritual edifice in which God will be eternally adored by Jesus Christ, who is the priest and the victim, and who, by His grace, makes us priests and victims and one Son of God with Himself. Jesus is the architect, the foundation, the corner-stone of this temple, who unites all the stones, as if with a cement, by His blood and spirit; and all these stones, though fixed in different places, are all united and in harmony in the position in which Christ has placed them, neither envy, or ambition, or any complaint is ever heard amongst them, nor does any of them desire to displace or usurp the place of another.

6th. We are one flock and one sheepfold, of which Christ is the great pastor, and a flock so united that, according to the prophet Isaias, "the wolf dwells with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid."[2] That is, Jew and Gentile, and all nations, civilized and barbarous, are united in the one flock of Jesus, who feeds them with His word and His adorable body, the great sacrament of unity and the admirable centre where all are united through Jesus Christ. Neither hatred nor discord is ever visible amongst this flock, because peace, patience, and meekness are its perpetual inheritance. All are guided by the same pastors, fed on the same pasturage, and all walk after and follow their shepherd in harmony to heaven, their eternal sheepfold.

They are brought into this unity by Jesus, who desires that His flock shall be one compact and united body, in order to give homage to the unity of the trinity of persons, who are distinct as persons, but one as God. So, too, although the faithful are different persons, they should have only one heart, one soul, and one spirit, the spirit of Jesus; and hence comes the peace we should have with our neighbour.

[1] Gal. iii. 28. [2] Isaias, xi. 6.

What is the origin of all the wars, quarrels, hostilities, litigations, disputes, and divisions reigning to-day in this world, in the Church, in families, and in almost every section of society? We will easily understand from the following explanation that all these divisions, &c., arise because those who originate them are not animated nor guided by the spirit of Jesus, because the spirit of Jesus is the spirit of peace. He came upon earth to establish this peace, and the only war He wants us to wage is against sin and our passions. He does not authorise or approve wars amongst men when they originate from ambition, vainglory, vengeance, or cupidity. No war is just except it is sanctioned by God, such as those waged by the Israelites against those nations which God commanded them to destroy, or those made for the love of justice, that is, when there is no other means than arms to defend oneself against unjust ursurpation; because if there be other means of defence, war should not be undertaken on account of its terrible and sinful consequences. Men could never be litigious if they possessed the spirit of Jesus, because He has taught His disciples to give up their cloak to them who only want their gown. He commands us to forfeit all our goods rather than wound charity, and to fight against our passions, which are the source of all wars and litigations; and hence St. James says: "From whence are wars and contentions amongst you? Are they not hence from your concupiscences, which war in your members."[1]

If we destroy the rule of our passions, we will soon see peace reigning amongst us, and animosities, hatreds, vengeance, murders, and assassinations will cease for ever, because Jesus will then reign in our hearts by His justice and His charity. The spirit of Jesus ignores those passions; and He Himself commands us to love our enemies, to pardon the severest injuries, and to bear with patience and forbearance all the evils which men may inflict upon us. Finally, whenever we see in the Church, or in the different bodies composing it, those disputes and dissensions, we will find that those engaged in them are not guided by the spirit of Christ; because neither the spirit, nor the inheritance, nor the doctrine of Christ can be divided. His doctrine is one, because it can never contradict itself; but men stray away and are split into different parties, because they are not led by the spirit of Christ who is the chief of the Church, the sole interpreter of the will of this holy spirit, and the only depository of His lights and wishes; and hence because men will not be led by this holy spirit, we see schisms, heresies, and other commotions springing up and

[1] James, iv. 1.

agitating the mystic body of Jesus. The Church has been agitated in every age by many tempests, and often appeared about to perish, but Jesus re-established her peace, and quelled the persecutions raised against her. When tyrants, heretics, schismatics, and even bad Catholics, made war upon her, when she was struggling in the midst of harassing and unmitigated persecutions, when the weak were exposed to many temptations, when the fear of torments caused many of them to forsake Jesus, when the Christian name was a bye-word all over the world, and the worship of the God of sanctity abandoned in many places, and when religion was neglected and hidden in obscure places, Jesus was always in her midst cheering, sustaining, fortifying, and assuring her the victory. The Lord fought and lived with His children, because they were detached from the world, because their hope was lively, their faith firm, their charity ardent, and their lives holy and perfect. He has put all the persecutions raised against them to an end, because those who raised them passed away and were cast into the fire after He had used them as the instruments of His justice. The impious can reign only as long as Christ uses them to accomplish His designs, and then He restores peace to His Church, and then the faithful assemble and pray with more liberty, the word of God is announced without fear, the sacraments are administered and received with more than the usual splendour, and all the faithful of Christ are again united to Him.

Heresy caused many troubles in the Church, because it caused the children of peace to fight against each other as Jacob and Esau did in the womb of Rebecca, and hence it led many into error and falsehood. So terrible were the tempests raised by those prophets of error, that falsehood appeared to be displacing the true doctrine, and the Church seemed to totter and about to be demolished; but the prayers and moans of the faithful awoke Jesus, who seemed to sleep in the midst of the storm-stricken barque, and He commanded the sea and the tempest to be at rest, the clouds of error to disappear, and His light and truth to confound and triumph over heresy, and thus He restored peace and tranquillity to His Church. Whenever we hear or see false doctrines cropping up in this world, we should address ourselves to this divine Saviour, and beseech Him to prevent by His power the spread and contamination of those pernicious errors.

Another cause of sorrow to our afflicted mother, the Church, is the scandalous lives of a great number of her children. She weeps over the spiritual death of those children, because she sees that they

are not living according to their vocation nor according to the sanctity of their chief or the precepts he has commanded them to observe. In Christ alone the Church finds her comfort, because she feels that He alone can raise up those fallen children from their spiritual death, and bring them back to the life of union which they had lost.

How is Jesus our interior peace?

He is so—1st. When we are united and entirely obedient to Him, because this entire submission to His supreme will is our veritable peace; because when we are united and strongly attached to Him with our whole hearts, as to the God of peace, we become in a certain sense like to Him, and hence when troubles and annoyances come upon us they come not because we are attached to Him, because He always dwells in a perfect peace. He is always immutable, and never suffers the least change. Persons united to Jesus participate in His repose, His tranquillity, and His immutability, in the same proportion as they are closely united to Him, and in such a union as this we wish only what He wishes, we desire only what is conformable to His will, and in this conformity we find our peace, our repose, and our tranquillity.

2nd. Jesus is the interior peace of the justified soul, because He calms all its troubles. There are three things which trouble a Christian. 1st. The review and the remorse arising from his past crimes, and the defects of his present state. 2nd. The evils he may suffer or the fear of those to come. 3rd. The passions, or the interior conflict to which he is exposed touching his past crimes. Jesus declared that He came into the world to save sinners, and that none shall perish if it be not their own fault. All the mysteries He has operated ought to animate our hope, and assure us against the fears and troubles which the sight of our past sins could cause in us, provided we have done penance for them, and that we are striving to repair them by a life entirely opposed to them; and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life."[1] Therefore, our troubles and our melancholy should cease when we remember that Christ has died for us, and hence we should place all our confidence in His infinite love for us, because He has merited for us the pardon of our sins. How can a true penitent want confidence and peace when he sees that he has, in the person of Jesus, a victim who is his reconciliation with God, and that he has Him as his mediator, his high

[1] Rom. v. 10.

priest and advocate, who offers unceasingly His prayers, His tears, and His sufferings for him; and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "Being justified, therefore, by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."[1]

If remorse of conscience presses upon us, if temptations to despair should trouble us, let us not do such an injury to the mysteries of Jesus, to His love, His promises, and the infinite remedy He has prepared to heal our wounds, as to doubt of His will to pardon not only our daily faults but our past crimes as well. He knows our weakness, and hence He desires to heal the light wounds which the infernal serpent daily inflicts upon us; and if we only look with a lively faith upon Him elevated upon the cross, we must have courage and confidence, because it is from this inexhaustible source of grace and mercy that the just can find a remedy for all their afflictions. The just man knows that he cannot escape all sin as long as he carries within him that concupiscence with which he was born, and which will seduce him to sin when he does not desire to commit it; but instead of those defects troubling him, they should rather make him more humble, because he knows that he should not sin, and, as St. John says in his first epistle, that "if he sin he has an advocate with the Father in Jesus Christ, the just, and that he is the propitiation for our sins."[2] And as St. Paul says to the Hebrews: "For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmites, but one tempted in all things, like as we are, without sin."[3]

Jesus secures the souls of the just against the troubles which present and future evils could cause in them; but it is right to fear God and the chastisements He could inflict upon us, which are generally the effects of His justice and His anger; and it is also right to fear death, judgment, and hell, because Christ Himself exhorts us to do so; but these fears should not deprive us of our peace, because we shall always find strength against them in Jesus Christ. Show me a Christian who is united to Jesus, who lives according to His life, who nourishes himself with His truth, who hungers and thirsts after His justice, and who already dwells in heaven by his hope of eternal goods, and you will see that the evils, the persecutions, the afflictions and crosses of the present life, are so far from troubling him and causing him to lose his peace, that he will rather rejoice to participate in the sufferings of Jesus, to conform himself to Him, to place all his glory in the cross, to bear in his flesh the mortifications

[1] Rom. v. 1 [2] 1 Ep. ii. 1, 2. [3] Heb. iv. 15.

of his Redeemer, and to take his crucified Saviour as his guide and as his consolation.

Death, which is so repugnant to human nature, will be an advantage to this just man, and he can even look with joy on the destruction of his tenement of clay. Judgment, so terrible in its consequences, and so formidable to the imperfect, will not make the just man melancholy, because he will regard it as the day of his entire redemption—that day which will usher him forth from the obscurity in which he lived dead to the eyes of men; and hence St. Paul says to the Colossians: "When Jesus shall appear, who is in your life, you shall appear with Him in glory."[1] Even hell, so terrible in the severity, the extent, and the duration of its punishments, a single thought on which is sufficient to fill one with fear and dread—even hell will not in the least trouble a Christian who has faith, nor can it cause him to lose his peace, because no power can separate him from the charity of Jesus, who gives him the confidence of a child of God, and the hope of one day becoming the co-heir of that Jesus with whom he suffers, and like whom he shall be glorified. Finally, we can say that Jesus is so much the peace of the Christian that nothing can trouble him to whom this divine Saviour is all things, and, therefore, if he be in tribulation Jesus is present to comfort him; if he suffer for Jesus he need not be disturbed, because the Lord has promised to take care of His own; and hence he can rest in peace under the protection and under the omnipotent and charitable hand of Jesus, whom he loves. Whatever wars his passions may stir up to trouble him, Jesus, who has established His kingdom in his heart, will become forthwith his peace and his joy; He will quell the tempest and calm the movements which his passions may have excited around him, for his edifice is built upon Jesus—that foundation which the waters of Babylon can never move or overthrow. Therefore, Jesus is the peace, the happiness, and the strength of the just, and they will seek them elsewhere in vain; and hence the prophet Jeremiah says: "I am not troubled in following thee for my pastor."[2]

Can we ever enjoy a perfect peace on this earth?

We must not flatter ourselves with the hope of enjoying an entire and perfect peace as long as we are living on this earth, for the cupidity of men, their inconstancy, their ambition, and all the other passions of rebelling humanity, stir up wars, troubles, and seditions every day around us; and hence even good people, though united to Jesus, will be obliged to fight and wage a continual warfare against their passions,

[1] Coloss. iii. 4. [2] Jer. xvii. 16.

and, therefore, it is almost impossible to escape some slight and passing trouble. Perfect peace can only be found in heaven, and it will be the recompense of the sufferings, the labours, and the victories endured and won over the enemies of our salvation. In this kingdom the soul of man shall never again be troubled by any angry thoughts, nor his heart assailed by any kind of passion, because all the inhabitants of this holy city are delivered from every feeling of pride and envy, they enjoy the same delights and the same contentment, and are satisfied with their degree of glory; they are filled with God to their hearts' fullest wishes, and make only one glorified man with Jesus; they are consummated in a perfect union with God, and they rejoice in unchangeable peace without the least fear of ever losing it, or of being disturbed in this happy and eternal repose. Oh, how we should yearn after this most blessed repose, and if we wish to gain it we must fight against the world, the devil, and the flesh, because He has promised it to those only who will be victorious, and who shall have loved and practised His law with fidelity.

Is there not a false peace which we ought to fear?

It is too true there are many sinners living in peace, but it is a phantom or false peace, and a peace more to be dreaded than the greatest of afflictions. It is false, because God says through His prophet Isaias, "There is no peace for the wicked;" and hence though the wicked may appear and really feel tranquil, still their peace and happiness are built upon foundations and fixed upon principles which should make their hearts tremble with horror.

1st. False peace comes from the devil; and hence St. Luke says: "When a strong man armed keepeth his court, these things are in peace which he possesseth."[1] The spirit of darkness, ever jealous of Christ's empire, wishes to hold all he has unjustly acquired, and hence he is most solicitous to keep them in a profound peace. How many unfaithful Christians do we not see most tranquil in their sinful state, whilst faith and conscience every day tell them that they are slaves to the prince of this world, because the devil keeps them away from hearing sermons and from reading the lives of the saints and other good books. He allows them to perform some good works and to discharge some duties of religion, and he seldom permits them to fall into revolting crime, lest the deformity of their deeds should rouse up their consciences from their false peace and sinful dreams; and he does so because he knows that there are two or three points on which he holds them fast. There are many

[1] Luke, xi. 21.

Christians who appear to live, while in the sight of God they are really dead, and who say, as we read in the Apocalypse: "I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,"[1] and subject also to the prince of darkness, who persuades them that they are rich in the goods of grace, and that hence they ought to be in peace.

False peace originates from a false conscience, and a false conscience is formed on false principles of morality, by which we exempt ourselves from the penitential precepts of the gospel in such a way as to please our self-love. Some persons form their conscience upon the ideas and opinions of persons who favour their laxity and tell them to be in peace; and hence St. Cyprian says that "false peace is dangerous for the false prophets who give it, and it is useless to those who receive it." This false conscience is also formed from the erroneous ideas which many persons conceive of God's goodness and mercy, as if God's justice should never punish what it forbids and condemns; but this would be an abuse of God's mercy and of His divine attributes, and to make an idol of oneself in the place of the holy, the just, and the true God. Some persons say that God will not be so exact and rigorous in His judgments as is said; and hence, because they are ignorant of the Sacred Scriptures, or interpret them to suit their habits, they live, and even die, in peace on those false principles. Those people will find, when too late, that their judgments are very different from those of Jesus, and that instead of the eternal peace they erroneously hoped for, they will have trouble, torture, and eternal confusion for their inheritance.

3rd. False peace originates also from the ignorance which persons have of the obligations of their state, and which is the fruitful source of countless sins, and hence we see many persons very exact in the discharge of the external duties of religion, and who neglect the obligations of their state of life, because they do not know them, and yet they live in peace. This is, in a special manner, the state of poor people who live and die in peace; and yet who have lived unworthy of their vocation.

4th. False peace arises likewise from servility, or too great condescension to persons in authority, such as kings, governors, magistrates, pastors of the Church, &c. Because such people do not want to create enemies for themselves, they wish to live in peace with the world, and thus they allow the empire of Satan to extend itself,

[1] Apoc. iii. 17.

and because they have not the moral courage to oppose its partisans. Many of the Jewish kings were condemned by God, and praised by the people for their good qualities, because through a slavish condescension for their subjects, they were afraid to destroy the high places where they sacrificed to God contrary to the ordinances of the law. Do we not see many mercenary pastors who, in order to be all to all, do not speak the truth they know, who hold it in captivity and betray it, in order, as they say, to live in peace with the whole world? But this is not the peace of Jesus, but that of the world—a peace more cruel than the wholesome trouble truth causes.

5th. This false peace is sometimes the unfortunate consequence of the obduracy of a heart which no truth had touched or troubled, and hence being free from remorse, which was stifled, he can live in peace in his sepulchre in the midst of rottenness, associating with monsters which he himself had engendered, and yet never perceiving them nor feeling his corruption, nor the gnawings of those worms which had almost consumed the life of his soul. Oh, strange and terrible peace, in which man no longer hears the voice of God, nor the cry of his own criminal conscience; but, alas! how could he hear them since he is dead and well pleased to be so?

EJACULATION TO JESUS, OUR PEACE.

Peace, my divine Jesus, is a good which all men seek and desire, but which all do not find. Like all other men, I feel a strong yearning for this great and ineffable good, because it is an inclination which I cannot efface from my nature. Everything within me and all my aspirations seek to possess this peace; all the revolts and combats of my passions, all the great troubles which men inflict upon themselves, all those extraordinary movements incline to peace, and even when I do evil I feel the sweetness of a happy repose, but, deceived in my hopes, I soon remembered that you said through your prophet that "there is no peace for the wicked."

In truth, my adorable Jesus, where can a sinner separated from you find peace? Shall it be in himself, in you, or in the creatures which infatuate him? What can he find in himself to calm him but a crowd of passions which trouble and never allow him any solid or constant repose. You have ordained, my God, by an economy wise as it is just that every irregular affection shall be its own punishment, and that the sinner shall be delivered to his own sin, and shall not enjoy a true peace. Oh, deplorable state of a soul which has abandoned

its God! Unhappy, my God, must be that soul which is able to believe that it can be happy and content whilst separated from thee. In spite of all she can do she will everywhere find afflictions, and on whatsoever side she will turn she will find that outside of you there is nothing but trouble and affliction of spirit.

The creatures which the sinner seeks after with ardour, and in which he foolishly expects to find repose, can never procure for him the good which he desires, because he can find nothing in this world but feeble supports and hideous emptiness. The rapidity with which all things in this world pass away, the instability and the litttle solidity we find in them do not permit us to repose for a long time on them. We labour much and we suffer more to gain a few perishable goods, and when we have succeeded, behold what trouble, concern, fear, and alarm it costs us to preserve them. They become a bed of thorns on which we never can peacefully repose. You, my adorable Saviour, are our only true peace, because you are the God, the king, the mediator, and the apostle of it; you are the king and prince of peace, and when you shall reign in my heart I shall taste the sweets of true peace, and it will keep my heart and soul in peace. Therefore, Lord Jesus and king of peace, live and reign in me by your grace and your love, and subject my passions and rebellious will to your sweet sway, because I shall never be in peace until I will only what you will. But, dear Lord, I feel and know that as long as I am in this world I shall have to sustain many combats from without, because such is the lot of every Christian here on earth. Heaven is a place of entire and perfect peace, where nothing can ever trouble those who dwell there; and hell is a place of agony and despair where there shall never be a moment's repose, because all kinds of peace are eternally exiled from it. But this earth is a compound of peace and war, of battles and victories, of calm and tempest, and in this state all Christians in the Church are obliged to live.

What shall I do, dear Lord, in those terrible times when your chaste spouse, the Church, will be cast like a ship on the troubled waters of this world, and harassed by many persecutions excited against her by the passions of men? Very few, dear Lord, invoke your omnipotent aid by their cries, their tears, and their sincere penitential labours. It appears as if all were combined to extinguish you, to stifle your truths, and to promote the reign of falsehood and crime; but I am comforted when I reflect that you, my adorable Redeemer, never sleep, and that, therefore, you will awake and dispose of your enemies. They may battle against your doctrines,

but they never can conquer you. Your barque may be tossed about, and your Church assailed, but she cannot be engulfed or demolished; and no matter how great and powerful the efforts of hell and the clients of Satan may be, they never can prevail against your Church, because you will always protect and govern her, and who can imagine himself strong enough to conquer you?

Happy are those who cling to you, and who place all their confidence in you alone, and who see, as a consequence, all those commotions in a peaceful and undisturbed repose. Grant us, dear Lord, your true peace, not that which the world promises and gives to its lovers. Never permit me, dear Jesus, to enjoy a false peace; overturn the foundations of my heart if it ever dares to repose elsewhere than in you. When shall the happy hour arrive when I shall possess eternal peace in your kingdom? Guide me to it any way you wish. I shall stand unmoved amidst the great commotions which may agitate this earth, because I can place myself with confidence beneath the shelter of your wings, until all the wickedness and injustices of man have passed away. Amen.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON JESUS, THE END OF ALL THINGS.

When we say that Jesus is the end of things we mean—1st. That He is the end of all the designs of God, that He is the Word, the eternal wisdom that has begun and finished all created works. 2nd. That he is the end of the law, of all the sacrifices, all the ceremonies, all the promises, and all the prophecies; because all the Old Testament regards and looks forward to Him; all it contains is concerning Him; He is concealed there under the shadows and figures which typify Him, and which have been developed in Him either as chief or in His mystic body; and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "Christ is the end of the law."[1] Jesus is not only the end of the law, but He should also be the end of our desires, as He has been of all those true Jews who lived before His coming upon this earth; and now we will explain these three points in this chapter.

How do we know that Jesus is the end of God's designs?

1st. We must remember that God is not like man, because His

[1] Rom. x. 4.

power and knowledge are boundless. When a man wishes to perform a work, the end he proposes to himself is that he has need of it, or that he wants to see what effect his work will produce, or because he wishes to know, by the essay he makes of his skill and intellect, what he is able to do. But God has no need of creatures, because He cannot receive any additional knowledge from the things He Himself has created. He saw this world from eternity as He now sees it, and He knows that He could produce in an instant many worlds much greater and grander than this which He has made. Therefore, we must suppose that as God had no need of creatures, He must have had some other object in view, and had proposed to Himself some other end worthy of the grandeur and the sanctity of His being, when He extracted this world from nothingness. But reason, revelation, and tradition teach us that His primary and principal design was to send His divine Son into this world, because as all things were to be made by Him, so all should be repaired by Him. God ought to be glorified in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, in a manner proportioned to the sanctity and grandeur of His supreme being; and hence He sent Jesus on this earth to form a people by a union with them, so that He and they would form only one man and one body; and hence we can say that perhaps God created this world, permitted man to sin, and preserved this vast and boundless universe after the fall of our first parents, in order that His Son, Jesus, would pay Him, by His incarnation and other mysteries, much greater honour than all creatures combined could ever be able to pay Him.

Therefore, we may add that God permitted this visible world to exist in order to prove, through His Son Jesus, the existence of the spiritual world—that holy city of which the Apocalypse speaks so many admirable things. All the ages which have passed, and all that are to come on, have existed, and will exist, to form the entire body of Christ, in which and by which God is to be glorified in time and through eternity. This is the end and the fulfilment of all God's designs, and it is only on the general judgment day we shall discover the grand and important truth that Jesus, as the Sacred Scriptures say, is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega, the first and the last letter of that great and sealed up book, whose seal shall be broken when the Lamb shall open it, to convince mankind and to show them that all that was written had been fulfilled. Jesus is the first object of His Father's contemplation; in Him He has placed all His affection, and nothing can please Him but through His Son, and this Son studies only the glory of His

Father in all he does. He has founded the Church to glorify Him in heaven, and ages have been permitted to succeed one another to from it. This is the grand work he had principally in view, this is the temple He has raised in honour of His Father's majesty and sanctity, and the first and principal thing which the Father wishes to see is that the entire body of His Son shall be completed.

It is also most certain that God loves His Church on account of His Son, Jesus, because this divine Son constitutes all the sanctity, the beauty, the grandeur, and the magnificence of this miraculous work. The Sacred Scriptures teach us that Christ is the father of this Church, and that by His grace, His divine word, and His spirit He has begotten it. He created it, and gives it health and strength; He lives with it, acts in it, and always inspires it; and when it suffers He suffers, and through Him alone it merits. When the Sacred Scriptures call this Church a kingdom, they mean to say that Jesus is the king, the law, the riches, the peace, and the union of her subjects. When they compare her to a living body, all the parts of which have such a marvellous affinity to each other, they wish to convey that Christ is the chief of that body, because the spirit and life are infused by Him into all her members; when they represent her as a temple, they mean to say that Christ is the foundation on which the whole edifice reposes, because He has cemented all the stones of it together, and because He is the high priest and victim, and all the faith and worship in it; when they represent her as a bride, they teach that Christ is her spouse, because by an alliance which He contracted with her He invested her with His merits, enriched her with His gifts, and so united her to Himself as to render her holy and pleasing in the eyes of His Father, to whom He wishes to present her. Behold how Jesus accomplished all the designs which His Father had upon Him and upon His Church, and which was the principal end He had in view in all that has been done.

How are we to understand that Christ is the end of the law? He is the end of the law in many respects. 1st. He is the accomplishment and the truth of the promises and the prophecies of that law; He is the reality and the substance of all its figures and foreshadowings; and He is the priest and the victim which the priesthood and the sacrifices of that law had predicted. All the Old Testament is a kind of veil which conceals Jesus the Chief, and the members, the spouse, and the bride from us; all the great men who appeared before the law have prefigured Jesus and His mysteries;

all the august ceremonies which God ordained were only a picture representing Him, and only a shadow which preceded, and a guide which conducted us to Him; all the great events which from time to time occurred, and all the ages which rolled by since the fall of our first parents, were to prepare man for His coming, and for the formation of that new people with whom he was to contract an alliance.

This divine liberator was promised from the beginning of the world, and mankind expected and sighed for His arrival, and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "For the end of the law is Christ unto justice to every one that believeth."[1] It is a truth well established in the Sacred Scriptures—a truth which we proved in the beginning of this work—that no person was, or ever will be, justified but in and through Jesus; and hence St. Luke says in the Acts of the Apostles: "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved,"[2] and consequently the Jews must believe in Jesus before they can be saved. The law did not abolish sin, it only made it known to men and convinced them of their weakness and impotency, for says St. Paul to the Hebrews: "It is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sins should be taken away."[3] No one can be justified save in the blood of Jesus, the true victim of propitiation—neither by the external observance of the law nor by its sacrifices, but only by faith in Jesus. All the ancient ceremonies and sacrifices were, says St. Paul to the Galatians: "Our pedagogue in Christ, that we might be justified by faith,"[4] in which men were to find their sanctification and their salvation.

The Israelites, who were Christians in advance, saw Jesus in all the promises which God made to His people, and in all the sacrifices as well which they had offered. Adam believed in Him, and this belief sustained his hopes after a sin which should have cast him into the deepest despair. "Abraham, your father, rejoiced," says Jesus, "that he might see my day; he saw it and was glad."[5] Isaac was instructed regarding Him by his father, Abraham. Jacob saw Him and foretold Him when blessing His children, as St. Paul says to the Hebrews. Moses knew Him and believed in Him when he abandoned the court of Pharaoh, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians."[6] And the same great apostle teaches that all the great men of the Old Law died in the faith of this divine Messiah. All the prophets speak of Him,

[1] Rom. x. 4. [2] Acts, x. 4. [3] Heb. x. 4.
[4] Gal. iii. 24. [5] John, viii. 56. [6] Heb. xi. 26.

of His mysteries, of the great blessings He was coming to impart to the world, and of the new alliance He was to make with a new people, of whom the Jews were only a figure. We see from the gospel, and from the epistles of SS. Peter and Paul, what great care both Jesus and they took to make men understand that the predictions of the prophets have been verified in the establishment of the New Law. "All things," says Jesus, "must needs be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses, in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me."[1] "God," says St. Peter, "hath shown by the mouth of all the prophets that his Christ should suffer"[2] the death we, the apostles, have seen Him suffer. St. Paul, writing to the Romans, not only makes known what the gospel preaches, "which God has before promised by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,"[3] but he adds, in his epistle to the Ephesians, that the Church "is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone."[4] St. Peter points out still more clearly that the prophets had Jesus and His Church chiefly in view when he said: "The prophets foretold the grace to come to you, to whom it was revealed that not to themselves but to you they ministered these things which are now declared by them that have preached the gospel to you."[5]

Therefore, it is true, by the evidence of Christ and His apostles, that as often as the prophets spoke of the wars of Judea and Assyria, of the ruin of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jewish people, that they intended to predict and prophesy of Jesus and His Church likewise; and it is equally true that all the writings of the law and the prophets were intended by God much more for Christ and His members than for the Jewish people. The history of this ancient people is no more than a veil or figure of the New Testament and the new people, and of all that has happened in it and to them. God has had us in view when He ordered those admirable books to be written, and the prophets and the just of the Old Law thought on the happiness men would enjoy at seeing their prophecies verified, and Christ says in the Gospel of St. Matthew that they longed to see them verified. "Amen, I say to you, many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them."[6] Therefore, we should seek Jesus only in the ancient Scriptures, and hence St. Augustine says: "All that is hidden there

[1] Luke, xxiv. 44. [2] Acts, iii. 18. [3] Rom. i. 2.
[4] Ephes. ii. 20. [5] 1 Ep. i. 10, 12. [6] Matt. xiii. 17.

is Jesus hidden, and all that is discovered there is Jesus discovered." All the history written from the creation of the world to the coming of the Messiah is the history in figure of Jesus, the second Adam, from whom the new people have been born, and who verifies and will verify Himself in His Church, as well as in Himself, all along to His second coming at the end of ages. The Old Testament is a kind of device or economy with something of the real and true, suitable for its own time; but Jesus is the hidden sense of this plan, and the Holy Ghost had this in view when He ordered the Sacred Scriptures to be written. Finally, nothing better proves that Christ is the entire end of the law than what St. Augustine says on that point when He compares "the Old Law to a mother near her confinement; she longs for the time of her delivery, and when it does come she dies just after the birth," and in this way Christ came forth from the womb of the law. He was growing by degrees during the succession of ages until the plenitude of time for His appearance had come, and being descended from the Jewish race according to the flesh, the law, or the mother in whose womb He had been concealed, died just when He appeared. This most happy event terminated all the desires of the ancient just, who suffered and groaned on account of His long delay, and who died in the faith and in the expectation of that blessed day when the heavens and the earth, and men and angels, would behold their Redeemer.

Should we, Christians, expect and ardently desire the second coming of Jesus as the Jews did His first coming? We have already said that the Jews, who were Christians in advance under the law, and who depended on the promises made to man from the beginning of the world, and renewed to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, knew and felt the necessity they had for a liberator, and hence ardently desired and expected to see Him. Sometimes they addressed themselves to heaven and sometimes to the earth, saying, "Rain down, you heavens, the just one as a dew," or "Send Him forth from the clouds as a salutary shower," or that the "Earth might open and bud forth the Saviour;" and sometimes they would say with Isaias, "Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb, the ruler of the earth, from Petra of the desert to the mountain of the daughter of Sion."[1] They expected with ardent desires the fulfilment of the prophecy of Aggeus, where God says: "Yet one little while, and I will move the heaven and the earth, and the sea and the dry land, and I will move all nations, and the desired of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, said the

[1] Isaias, xvi. 1.

Lord."[1] This Word, so long expected, has come at last, and He lived upon this earth three-and-thirty years, and "He went about doing good,"[2] and "the world knew Him not."[3] He was known by a few persons only for what He was, and after He achieved the great work of our redemption, He ascended into heaven, and before He left He said that in a little time He would return. The angels who were witnesses of His ascension, and who accompanied Him in His triumph, said to those who were present that Jesus whom they looked after would return at the end of time, full of power and majesty, just as they saw Him ascending now from the earth. All the writings of the apostles assure us that He will so come, and we say at the same time that we expect Him, and that He should be the end of all our desires, and such should be the feeling of every true Christian.

How could you prove that Christ ought to be the end of all our desires, and that we, as true Christians, ought to desire and expect this coming of our Redeemer?

This truth is established—1st. In the sacred writings of the New Testament, where St. Luke says: "Let your loins be girt and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves like to men who wait for their Lord when He shall return from the wedding."[4] Jesus has ascended up to heaven, where He celebrates the divine wedding-feast with His spouse, that portion of the Church already in paradise, and He says He will soon return to us. He will return at the hour of death to judge us individually, and at the general judgment to judge the whole world; but in whatever way He may come, we ought to expect and desire His coming, having our loins girt, and, like good soldiers, always ready for the combat, always prepared to fulfil His commandments, and, like exiles, always glad to quit this miserable earthly bondage. The mortifications of penance should be the cincture of our loins, and faith, charity, and good works ought to be the lamps burning in our hands as we go forth to meet our Judge. But, alas! how very few Christians there are who live in this expectation, and who have this desire for the coming of Jesus; and hence when He will come they will be surprised and found unprepared to meet Him. The avaricious will meet Him in the midst of their riches, the debauchee in the midst of his profligacies, women of the world in the midst of their pleasures and amusements, and all sinners in the midst of their sins. We should never forget the parable of the ten virgins who waited the arrival of the spouse, how joyful those were who were prepared to enter the marriage feast,

[1] Aggeus, ii. 7, 8. [2] Acts, x. 38. [3] John, i. 10. [4] Luke, xii. 35, 36.

and how mortified those were who were not prepared, and hence were refused an entrance.

The apostles, educated in the school of this divine Master, have taught us this very truth, and hence St. Paul, in his second epistle to Timothy, says: "The Lord hath laid up a crown of justice, not only for Himself, but for all those who love His coming;"[1] and in his epistle to the Philippians he says: "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we also look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of His glory;"[2] and in his epistle to Titus he says: "For the grace of God, our Saviour, hath appeared to all men, instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ."[3] St. Peter says in his second epistle: "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it shall be burnt up, that our conversations should be holy and in godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of the Lord, and looking for the new heavens and the new earth according to His promises, in which justice dwelleth."[4]

All these authorities prove clearly enough that Christians ought to live in the desire and expectation of the coming of Jesus. This truth is also proved from reasons founded on religion—1st. Christianity commands us to adore a God made man, who spent His years upon this earth in the contempt of everything in this world, and who had no other desire than to finish the work His Father gave Him to perform, and after doing so to return to heaven, from whence He came. We should live in this world, like Him, as if we were not in it, our hearts and our souls ought to to be entirely centered in God, all our desires should be to see and to possess Him, our only good, the only object of our love and desires, so that we may be certainly consummated in our Chief, Jesus Christ.

2nd. We were made Christians and children of God by the Holy Ghost, whom we received at our baptism and in the other sacraments; and hence St. Paul says to the Romans that God poured the spirit of His grace into our hearts, and this spirit made the children of God "groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of their bodies,"[5] which will be at the end of time,

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 8. [2] Philip. iii. 20, 21. [3] Titus, ii. 11, 12, 13.
[4] 2 Peter, iii. 10, 11, 12, 13. [5] Rom. viii. 23.

when their bodies shall arise invested with immortality and glory; and hence all true Christians should be incessantly saying with St. John in the Apocalypse: "Come, Lord Jesus, the spirit and the spouse."[1] They should say this and say it to all those who are animated with the Holy Spirit, "by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption,"[2] says St. Paul to the Ephesians; and "who is the pledge of our inheritance unto the redemption of acquisition, unto the praise of His glory."[3] But this seal and those pledges make us expect the goods which God has promised us at the time He gave them to us and marked them with His seal.

3rd. A Christian is the spouse of Jesus, because He contracted this alliance with us at our baptism, and through the sacrament of His most adorable body and blood, and the soul thus united to Him thinks only of loving Him, and always fears to lose Him, and when He is absent her only desire is to see Him returned, because His absence always appears too protracted to her. But how very few spouses do we find burning with this desire to see Jesus? St. Augustine gives us a true picture of what the sincere spouses of Christ are when he says: "Let us suppose two women, one of whom loves her spouse, but the other does not love *her* spouse, because she is engaged in a criminal pursuit. Both husbands are absent, and she who is unfaithful, far from wishing the return of her husband, fears his arrival, she desires that his absence may be prolonged, and even wishes that he will never return. On the contrary, the chaste spouse continually longs for the return of her spouse, and no matter how unexpectedly he comes he never can find her unfaithful." With which of these women does conscience tell us we ought to be associated? If we live in crime we love the world, we prove unfaithful to Jesus, our spouse, and we do not yearn for His coming; but if we are animated with the spirit of Jesus, if His love predominates within us, if our lives correspond to that fidelity which we owe to our heavenly spouse, we will desire His coming in order to rejoice in His divine presence, and be delivered from all dangers and temptations, and thus foil that old serpent, the devil, in his efforts to surprise and enslave us. But, alas! how few Christians are animated with those dispositions? How few of them live in the desire and expectation of Jesus? The great ones of this world, who live in the midst of pleasures and worldly abundance, those who esteem themselves happy in the possession of riches, and who know neither Jesus nor the felicity He has promised to His children, these are not

[1] Apoc. xxii. 27. [2] Ephes. iv. 30. [3] Ephes. i. 14.

amongst the few who long for the coming of Jesus, because they prefer houses of amusement, the opera, and other such sinful exhibitions; they desire excesses in eating and drinking, resorts of debauchery, and profane conversations, to the expectation of the coming of Jesus; and hence when He comes they will be taken in surprise and alarm.

4th. Nothing is more conformable to religion than this desire of the day of the Lord, because when we say, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," we desire, or at least we ought to desire, the coming of Christ; and hence St. Cyprian says: "What could be more unworthy of the Christian who, after he has said the Lord's Prayer, does not come to Christ when He comes to him, and who does not obey His voice when He calls him away from this world?" "There are three classes of persons," says St. Augustine, "who make this demand from God—namely, sinners, the perfect, and the imperfect. It is an awful prayer for sinners who live in their crimes, because they call upon God to come to judge them; the imperfect make this prayer between hope and fear, but they ought to grow in charity in order to lessen their fear and increase their hope; and the perfect say it with undivided hearts and the fullest confidence, because they regard the coming of the Lord as that happy day which will give them the greatest of all blessings."

5th. We are Christians by faith, by hope, and by charity. Faith teaches us the great and sublime virtues, but we do not know them all, and we know very imperfectly those we were taught; hope impels us to desire those virtues; and charity makes us love them; and the three combined direct us to long for the coming of Jesus, because we shall possess these only when He shall come and shall have taken us with Him. Whatever the Sacred Scriptures and the fathers say of Jesus will be pleasing to us when we love Him; but they do not unveil all the beauties nor all the grandeur of this divine object to us; because we wish to see Him face to face and such as He is. So far is the invisible presence of Christ in the adorable Eucharist from satisfying the soul, that it augments its hunger and thirst to see and to possess Him, and, inflamed with this sentiment, she cries out with Holy David, "What have I in heaven, and, besides thee, what do I desire upon earth?"[1]

The third reason which should direct the Christian to desire the coming of Jesus originated from the consideration of the great blessings it will procure for us. Jesus, when speaking of His last

[1] Psalms, lxxii. 25.

coming to the Jews, said that when they shall see the terrible signs which are to usher in that awful day, when they shall see the earth stricken by an universal earthquake, the sun veiled in blood, the moon stripped of her effulgence, the stars forgetting the training of ages and flying in unbridled fury through the firmament, men trembling with a terrible fear, and all the elements inflamed with fire, "they ought to look up and lift their hands, because their redemption is near."[1] That is, that they ought to see all those marvellous movements in the universe with joy and confidence, just as soldiers do when they see the city they had besieged about to fall into their hands. When the elect shall see the overthrow and destruction of this world, the wicked Babylon, they shall experience neither fear nor alarm, but, on the contrary, they shall be filled with joy to see their Redeemer come to deliver them from evil and from the power of their enemies. This will be the day of their entire redemption. 1st. It will be the redemption of those bodies of ours, which so stupify and oppress our souls as to prevent them from elevating themselves to heaven and to God; because then our bodies will be no longer subject to corruption, but invested with immortality and glory. 2nd. It will be the redemption of our souls, because they never again will be subject to ignorance, to error, or to concupiscence, for all shall be entirely destroyed on that day, and the victorious and emancipated soul shall be delivered from the temptations and dangers to which she was so long exposed. 3rd. We will be delivered from all the sufferings of our pilgrimage and exile, and from the terrible uncertainty of salvation. 4th. It will be the day of redemption for all creatures subject to corruption and slaves to the passions of men, who used them contrary to the intention of the God who created them. 5th. It will be the day of the redemption and of the entire triumph of that truth which injustice held so long captive, because on that day truth will judge mankind, and will trample under foot all who hold her captive, all who by malice, servility, cowardice, or self-interest dishonoured her, and all those in particular who maligned and persecuted her.

We should all desire the coming of Jesus, in order to witness the fulfilment of all His designs regarding the elect, for nothing grander can be conceived than what will happen when Jesus will come to separate the elect from the multitude of the reprobate. We will see on that day that the great designs of Jesus were—1st. To acquire His kingdom in order to subject it to His Father, because He will

[1] Luke, xxii. 28.

re-assemble all the subjects which composed this kingdom; and hence St. Paul says, in his first epistle to the Corinthians: "Afterwards the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father."[1] 2nd. On this day, Jesus, as high priest of the living God, will offer the victim, all entire, to God, His Father; He will communicate Himself to it; He will carry it in His hands and in His heart; He will enter into His Father's bosom from whence he came, and He will present all the elect to Him; and then God the Father will communicate Himself to the entire victim which His Son had offered to Him, and He will unite it to Himself by this communion, and will make it participate in His glory, His goodness, His sanctity, and all His grandeurs. 3rd. On that day the beauteous temple will be finished which Jesus, as the grand architect, had raised to the glory of His Father. All the saints shall be living stones in this temple, and the last who died will be the consummation of this incomparable work.

Oh, where is the Christian who would not desire to see this edifice so completely finished that a single stone will not be wanted to perfect it. 4th. This edifice will not be complete until the body of Jesus shall be entirely finished. All creatures are in expectation of this most happy day, and they groan for the time that Jesus will be entirely formed by the reunion of the Chief with the members; and all the great revolutions which will occur in nature on that day will only serve to produce this great body in the world of glory. 5th. Jesus will come to unite Himself to His spouse, and to celebrate the eternal marriage feast with her. Then, as St. John says in the Apocalypse, the angels will invite all the saints "to rejoice and be glad, for the marriage feast of the Lamb is come"[2] which was so long desired and expected. Therefore, if we possess even a little faith, we must be convinced that if we love Jesus and His Church we must desire His coming, because His Church, which is His body and His spouse, will only be completely formed when time will be no more, and when He will come to separate her from the body of the reprobate to unite her to Himself for all eternity.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, THE END AND ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ALL THINGS.

O my God, the more I consider how you have extracted this vast universe from nothingness, and how you preserved it since the fall of

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 24. [2] Apoc. xix. 7.

man by your goodness and your omnipotence, the more I am convinced that you had no other object in view than your own glory and the salvation of mankind. Who but your Son, God like you and man like us, could render you a glory befitting your majesty and the grandeur of your being? You sent your divine Son upon this earth, and designed that man, who had fallen into the abyss of perdition, should be saved through Him. For this purpose the world has existed ever since, and for this end all the great events have occurred which happened from the beginning of time.

You, O my omnipotent God and sovereign master, have had only in view your Son, Jesus, who was to establish this grand body which was to glorify you in time and eternity. You wished that in order to complete this grand work all power should belong to Him—the power of the divinity, in order to give you infinite honour; the plenitude of power and authority, in order to be able to found laws to be observed in the kingdom He was to acquire and to make subject to you; the plenitude of wisdom, in order to take the most proper and conformable means to heal the wounds which sin had inflicted upon man; the plenitude of grace, in order to communicate it to that body and to each of its members, of which He was to be the chief, and which was to be only one Christ and one man with Him; the plenitude of truth and glory, in order to enlighten the Church and to glorify it in heaven, after He had united it to Himself upon earth, and sanctified and washed it clean in His blood, in order to present it to His Father without stain or wrinkle.

O great God, what do you see in this body, this Church, this kingdom, worthy of your love, but Jesus, who is all its beauty, its power, its sanctity, and in whom you have centered all your affection? Therefore, my divine Jesus, you are the end of all your Father's designs, and when your body shall have been completely finished, and when you shall have presented it to Him in heaven, then all these designs shall be fulfilled, and nothing will be wanted for the perfect completion of this grand work. When the heavens and the earth shall have passed away; when the reprobates united to their chief, the prince of darkness, shall have been precipitated into the fiery pool; and when the society of the elect, united to Jesus, their chief, shall have passed into eternal glory; then we shall see clearly that you are the first and the last—the first production from your Father's bosom, the first in all His ways, by whom all things have been made, and by whom He has repaired and reunited all things in heaven and on earth.

Then we will see that you, dear Redeemer, were the first in His Church, in His body, and in His kingdom, and the first of His elect, through whom all have been chosen, called, and glorified. You, dear Lord, are not only the first, but you are the last, because all things relate to you, all shall end in you, and in you He who accomplishes all things in all, shall find the entire fulfilment of the great work he had designed to form. You, my divine Jesus, are not only the end of all your Father's designs, but you are the end likewise of the Old and the New Law. You were figured, promised, expected, desired, and sought for by the Old Law, and many kings and prophets died with a desire to see you. All the just of the Old Law believed in you as the coming Redeemer of Israel. All that is related in the Old Testament, the figures, the ceremonies, the sacrifices, the priesthood, the prophets, the Jewish people; all that has occurred to the Israelites, the wars and persecutions they had to sustain, their sufferings in the desert, and their happiness in the land of promise; all the great men who figured on this earth for four thousand years, all relate to you, my divine Saviour, as Chief, and to your body, your person, your mysteries, your members, and your entire Church as well.

When I read the Old Testament, and when I see there that all its history is true, and that all the events promised have happened, I admire and praise your adorable economy. But I see all these things in the perspective only, for if I view them closer I will see that all those armies, battles, and other figures represented in the picture, refer to you, my dear Jesus, and to your passion, your mysteries, and your entire mystic body. How could I have sufficient penetration to understand all those marvellous revelations; but it will suffice for me to know that St. Paul says that all that has happened to this ancient people is only an image, a figure, and a shadow of the body and the truth which we have received in you, my Saviour, who art the end and the accomplishment of them. You are the divine object referred to by the Sacred Scriptures, because they conduct us to you and contain you in their bosom. If I seek you in the Old Testament, I will find you hidden there; and if I seek you in the New Testament, I will find you unveiled. May this inquiry be not useless to me, may it serve to nourish my faith and to impress you on my interior and on my whole conduct; grant that all I know of your grandeur, of the sanctity of your mysteries, and of your Church, may inspire me to love you and to desire your glorious coming.

I know, my adorable Saviour, that you ought to be the end of all my desires, that I ought to be in continual expectation of the day

when you are to judge me at death, and mankind at the end of time. I confess, my Jesus, that I fear sometimes to desire your coming. I fear to die, because I am not prepared; I am ashamed to live, because I am not correcting myself; and I am filled with fear when I regard you as my judge, because charity is not perfect in me. Infuse, dear Lord, this holy charity into my heart through your holy spirit, so that, animated by this spirit, I may become one day your faithful spouse, and that I can say: Come, Lord Jesus, and put an end to the reign of Satan and concupiscence in me; come to deliver me from all my sufferings and from all evils and dangers; come and deliver our bodies from corruption, our souls from the tyranny of our passions, and all creatures from the vanities to which a sinful world, in spite of them, has subjected them.

I cannot help admiring the grandeur of the great day of the Lord which will fully develop the despair of the reprobate and the joy of the elect. On that day, my loving Jesus, we will see you a King full of glory and majesty, after having acquired and presented your kingdom to your Father to be subject to Him for all eternity. There we will admire all the members of thy mystic body reunited to you, its Chief. Then the spouse of the Lamb shall be invested with glory, without stain or wrinkle, radiant with light and sanctity, and prepared for the grand marriage feast which begun from the foundation of the world. Then we will see the holy city, the magnificent temple which you had been raising to your Father's glory, entirely finished, and all the elect placed as so many living stones in this grand edifice to glorify God for eternity. Then we will see the end of all things—the end of this visible and terrestrial world, and the end of all the iniquity that ever reigned upon it. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, where justice will dwell and where you will be the beginning and the end of all—the alpha and omega, the first and the last letter in that great book which is sealed with seven seals, and which will be opened, and wherein we shall read all the designs and secrets of God regarding you, dear Lord, and your members. What Christian with even a little faith and love for you, my loving Jesus, could abstain from desiring your coming, when the angels, the blessed in heaven, and all creatures, desire and long for it. I know, dear Lord, that the love of the world and its false goods, hinders many from desiring your coming, because they are pleased with the things here below, and put their entire affections in them.

They sleep in the midst of the vain pleasures of the age, and they hear not when you call, and they know not when you will come; they

wish that you will not come, and that you will permit them to rest peacefully in the enjoyments of the present life. Do not allow me, dear Lord, to fall into that terrible state so common now amongst Christians; detach my heart from worldly goods, and from the world itself, so as to save me from a state so deplorable, and in order that I may always desire to be liberated from the bonds of my body and to be united with you. The desire of your coming fills the human heart with admirable dispositions, because he who longs much desires ardently to see the absent object of his desires; he sighs at being deprived of it, and he suffers on account of its long absence, and if he seeks a remedy for his sufferings he can only find it in the possession of Him whose absence caused all this pain. Finally, he who seeks a remedy for his evils does not amuse himself in running after the vain joys of this world. Put those holy dispositions into my heart, dear Redeemer, in order that I may be able to say: Come, Lord Jesus, come; because there is nothing in heaven or on earth that I desire but thee. Amen.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON JESUS, THE JUDGE OF THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

THERE is no truth better established in the Sacred Scriptures than that which teaches that Jesus is the Judge of the living and the dead; and hence St. John says: "For neither doth the Father judge any man, but hath given all judgment to the Son."[1] Jesus, as Son of God, receives His divine essence from His Father, together with all His knowledge, His will, His intentions, and His power; and Christ Himself says in the gospel of St. John: "The Son cannot do anything of Himself but what he seeth the Father doing; and what things soever He doth these the Son also doth in like manner; for the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things which Himself doth."[2] So that whatever the Son makes the Father makes with Him, because He is in the Father, and the Father is in Him, and having but one and the same essence. But Jesus has power to judge mankind not only as the Son of God, as He himself said, but as the Son of man as well.[3] In this quality He will exercise the power to judge the world, and this in a visible manner, because He alone of the Trinity became visible by the incarnation,

[1] John, v. 22. [2] John, v. 19, 20. [3] John, v. 27.

and because He alone is the Son of God and the Son of man together. As the Son of God He will judge invisibly with His Father, and He will judge visibly as the Son of man. As God He has all the light, the wisdom, the justice, and the power to judge; and as the man-God He has acquired this power by His death and resurrection; and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "For to this end Christ died and rose again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living."[1] The time will come when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they shall come forth from the tomb at His command, and be assembled in His presence to be examined and judged according to the good or evil that each had done. He shall separate those unclean animals, the goats from the sheep, and the sheep shall go with Him into the eternal sheepfold, and the others shall be hurled into everlasting flames.

Finally, it is just and reasonable that Christ should be established the sovereign Judge of mankind, because He came to merit the necessary graces for them, and to work out their salvation. He became chief of the Church, and hence the Father has given Him power to judge, so that He can save or condemn those who had profited or abused His graces, His mysteries, and all He has done for them, and that He may reward or punish mankind for whom He became man. We cannot doubt this truth, because Christ Himself taught it, and His apostles preached it, and we read in the Acts: "He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who is appointed by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead."[2] He will judge us at death and on the general resurrection day. The first judgment is called the particular, and the second the general judgment.

I.—THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT.

Is there a particular judgment at death on each particular person?

St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, says: "And it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment."[3] The parable of the wicked rich man and Lazarus leaves no doubt whatsoever on this matter, because we read how this wicked man was tormented in the fire, and how Lazarus enjoyed eternal goods. We see that the poor in spirit are borne after death by angels into Abraham's bosom, and that the rich man was buried in hell, and that

[1] Rom. xiv. 9. [2] Acts, x. 42. [3] Heb. ix. 27.

one was rewarded and the other punished forthwith after death; and hence this could not be unless there is a particular judgment.

Will the particular judgment be terrible, and ought we to fear and dread it much.

There are three particular reasons why we should fear this particular judgment—1st. That Jesus will judge all the good or evil we have done by the standard of truth. 2nd. He will judge according to the sanctity of our lives. And 3rd. He will judge according to His mercy.

This divine Saviour came upon earth as the doctor of truth in order to instruct mankind, to teach them what they ought to believe, and what they ought to do to gain eternal happiness; and hence He will judge according to truth. Picture to yourself the surprise of a soul feebly believing in a future state, when she finds herself suddenly launched into the world of spirits, when the veil of the flesh is dissolved and the prison of the body destroyed. She sees above her an abode of ineffable delights, and beneath her an eternity of frightful horrors, and she knows not into which of the two she will be for ever consigned. In this terrible uncertainty she appears at the foot of that Sovereign's throne who is to judge her; she is alone, unattended, and no matter how loud and piteously she appeals to her friends, she is not heard by any one.

There stands the once proud and haughty monarch abandoned by all his subjects; there the wealthy are stripped of their riches, and the men and women of the world without a single joy or pleasure. There they stand in the presence of Jesus waiting to be judged; and we shall surely be there likewise, for holy David says that "Jesus will judge all people according to truth."[1] And hence sinners will not be judged according to the error and the falsehood which they so often adopted for truth. Worldlings make rules according to the dictates of their false consciences, and hence they regard usury, effeminacy of life, operas and comedies, as lawful and allowable. By these rules they judge of the dispositions necessary for the saints in a manner unworthy of their sanctity; but the truth of Christ is immutable and eternal, a rule never changing like those of men, which vary according to their caprices. Jesus will not judge us according to the opinion of any particular author or favourite confessor, but He will see if our lives have been conformable to eternal truth, which is the word of God, the light of all created spirits, the universal reason which teaches mankind that he ought to prefer God

[1] Psalms, xcv. 13.

to all things, to embrace virtue, and to fly from vice, not to do to others what we would not wish to be done to ourselves, and many other truths written in plain characters upon our consciences. Jesus is the great doctor of truth; He has taught us many things which are not published in His gospel, and which He intended for our instruction through the medium of tradition. He has taught us through the Holy Ghost, whom He has given to His Church; and He has taught us through His apostles, whom He instructed in His own school; and hence St. John says in the Apocalypse: "I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened, and another book was opened which is the book of life, and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books according to their works."[1] St. John speaks here of more books than one, and hence we must see what those books are.

The first is the book of life, and hence he says in the Apocalypse: "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire."[2] But are we written in that book and on the few to be saved? This is a mystery in the truths delivered to us, but we will be most certainly written in it if we observe the precepts of the Lord, if we walk perseveringly in the narrow way of the gospel, and if we are conformable to Jesus, the image of the invisible God.

The second book which will be opened at our particular judgment will be the book of the gospels, because it is the rule of all Christians, of kings and pastors, poor and rich, masters and servants, parents and children, solitaries and virgins; and all who have not lived according to this rule shall be condemned; and hence St. Paul says to the Romans: "In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel,"[3] and again in his second epistle to the Thessalonians St. Paul says: "And He shall yield vengeance to them who know not God, and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."[4]

The third book to be opened will be the conscience of each one to be judged. All our judgments and desires, all our feelings and inclinations, all our attachments, and all our actions, will be recorded in this book; and if Jesus shall find His law, which was engraved on them by the finger of God, still unsullied, we shall have reason to be glad, because it will be the subject of our eternal happiness; but if there be in that book only what originated from cupidity, then we shall see with horror the subject matter of our eternal condemnation.

[1] Apoc. xx. 12. [2] Apoc. xx. 15. [3] Rom. ii. 16. [4] Thess. i. 8.

The fourth book to be opened on this awful occasion will be our baptismal vows, and this book will show that the Father received us amongst the number of His adopted children, and that we became the brothers, the members, and the spouses of Jesus and the temples of the Holy Ghost. We shall be judged upon all these qualities and also upon the promises which we made through our sponsors, and which were carried up to heaven by angels, and recorded in our baptismal book, and all of which shall be laid before us while standing at the tribunal of Jesus. The ineffaceable character with which our souls were impressed by this holy sacrament, and which distinguishes us from all other nations, and the white robe of innocence in which we were that day invested, will be accusers and witnesses against us if we had sullied the one and destroyed the other by our crimes, unless we had re-invested ourselves by penitential tears and purified ourselves with the blood of the Lamb.

Jesus Himself will be the fifth book to be opened. This book has been made firm with seven seals, all of which shall be broken on that day, and we will see most clearly, all His mysteries, all His virtues, and all His feelings and dispositions, and we shall be judged on each of these, and this is the second reason why we should fear the particular judgment, because our divine Saviour is not only the doctor of truth, but the model by which we should regulate our lives and our entire conduct as well.

2nd. Jesus was most holy both as God and as man, because He had by both of His natures an infinite hatred not only for actual sin, but for every defect and shadow of imperfection. Ah, how humiliating and crushing this sanctity of God will appear to the sinner when he contrasts his own deformity with it, and when he is obliged to stand before it to be judged. Jesus will manifest before us on that day all He is, all His virtues, and all His dispositions. He will oppose His spirit to our spirits, His heart to our hearts, His actions to our actions, and His life and conduct to our lives and conduct, in order to manifest what conformity will then exist between Him and us; and hence we will see that what rewards or punishments He shall deal out to us shall be just and well merited.

Oh, who will be able to withstand this awful comparison? Who can stand unmoved to fear before this awful tribunal, where Jesus will Himself be the judge, the evidence, and the accuser, and His holy law the standard by which we shall be judged? He will say: Behold my charity, where is yours? behold my humility, where is yours? behold my patience, my meekness, my love of purity, and

my poverty, where are yours? Look at your virtues and compare them with mine, and see how unconformable you are to me, your model. Oh, what grief and confusion shall attend the avaricious when they are judged according to the poverty of Jesus, who had not whereon to lay His head. What agony shall attend the proud and the ambitious when they are judged according to the humiliations of Jesus, who fled when the Jews wished to make Him king, and who preferred to be treated as the last of men. What bitter anguish for the envious and the vindictive to be judged according to Jesus, who prayed for and died for His enemies. This man-God will not require on this occasion His thunders and lightnings to confound the sinner, because His mere presence will overwhelm them with shame and despair. His presence alone, says St. Paul, and the splendour of His glory, will cover the unfortunate reprobates with horrible confusion. He will exhibit His head crowned with thorns, and His face disfigured with bruises and spittle, to those worldly women who had been proud of their beauty and vain of their dress and accomplishments; and He will show His dead body covered with wounds to the lovers of the pleasures of the senses and of the flesh. Oh, what sinner can stand the sight of those awful and touching pictures? None of them can withstand this trying contrast, and, without waiting to hear their final destiny, they will strive to plunge into hell, their everlasting dwelling-place.

3rd. The third reason why we should dread the particular judgment is that we will be judged according to the great mercy of God, and upon the countless benefits we have received from Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who will demand an exact account of how we used or abused them. We must account in this judgment for every grace we received, no matter how small or trivial it had been, and the greater and more numerous were the graces we received, the more searching and rigorous will be the examination. He who had received five talents, and he who had received only two, must give an account in proportion to the amount he received; and he who had hidden, and had not profited by the one he had received from the householder, shall be cast as an unprofitable servant into exterior darkness. We shall be examined upon all the great graces we received from Jesus, upon all the mysteries worked in our behalf, upon all the sacraments instituted and administered for our sanctification, upon all the spiritual lights, inspirations, and movements given and produced in us by the Holy Ghost, and upon all the means for salvation given to us by our holy Church. All these are so many

effects of God's mercy, the abuses of which will entail upon the culpable a terrible condemnation. The Jews will be treated on that day with more rigour than the people of Sodom, and Christians much more so than the Jews, because they received a much larger and a greater number of graces. And, oh, what shall we say who were purchased with the blood of Jesus when He comes to judge us?

EJACULATION TO JESUS, OUR JUDGE AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH.

It is certain, my divine Saviour, that I shall one day die. This decree is irrevocable, because God has pronounced it, and it is equally true that after death I must appear before your tribunal to be judged. As God and man you have a sovereign dominion over me, and hence when you call me away from this life, you have a right to judge me. What could be more just and reasonable than that you should be my judge, who were in life my redeemer, my mediator, my priest, my victim, my chief, and my pastor? But, Lord Jesus, what will become of me, how shall I dare to appear before you? There was a time when my heart rejoiced when I thought of the happy day on which I should behold you; but now this same heart is filled with fear when I think that you are to be my judge, and that the rule of your judgment shall be your truth, the sanctity of your life, and the countless favours you bestowed on me. When I examine myself without prejudice, I see that instead of ruling my conduct according to your truth and your gospel, I unfortunately allowed the world, its habits, my passions, and my self-love to lead me where they willed.

I conformed myself to the language, the maxims, and the customs of the world instead of to your wishes and dispositions, and now I can scarcely find in myself a single trait or character of the celestial man. I tremble when I reflect that my heart and soul, my inclinations, my actions, and my entire life are to be confronted with yours, because I see an infinite disproportion between them. St. Paul tells me that, if I wish to be saved, my life must be conformable to your life; and yet I find in myself very few marks of your charity, your humility, your spirit of poverty, your crucified and penitential life, and if you will not discover this conformity in me, I must merit and expect the sentence of the reprobate. How can I reflect on all this without a feeling of horror?

What shall I do in that deplorable state into which the consideration of your justice must bring me? My dear Saviour, it is time to employ the remainder of my life in appeasing your just anger by my

penitential tears and regret. I am now a criminal convicted of a thousand crimes, detained in a prison where I am permitted to live, and where the time of my dissolution is unpronounced in order to afford me an opportunity to appease my Judge and obtain His grace. Can it be possible that, thus situated, I can spend my days in sin and folly, seeking after amusements and the indulgence of my passions? No, my Jesus, my life shall be in future a life of death, a life filled with horror at the sight of my past sins, and hoping to obtain pardon of them. I cry out to you from the profound abyss into which sin has plunged me, from that lowliness into which a dread of my past life has cast me, and from the depth of that grief and sorrow by which my wretched heart is stricken, to have pity on me and to listen to the prayers I address to you. I know, dear Lord, that if you wish to examine all my sins according to the rigour of your justice, I never can appear before you, who are the God of infinite sanctity.

The most holy life must appear criminal in your presence if you judge it without mercy; but, my Saviour, you suffer yourself to be appeased through your mercy, and you are yourself the victim of propitiation for the sins of mankind. I await, dear Jesus, with patience for your mercy, because your law, and the promises you have given to pardon Sion if she returned with her whole heart, make me hope that you will forget all my iniquities. Treat me, dear Lord, as you wish during the remainder of my life; afflict and overwhelm me with sufferings and humiliations, and still I will hope in you. I will go to rest every night and awake every morning with this hope in my heart and on my lips, and always remembering that you are full of mercy, because you died to redeem me. O death of my Saviour, that has gained so much grace for me as to deliver me from my sins. Through this death I hope to escape from the servitude of my passions, and that you will judge me only when my sins are all pardoned after a true contrition and confession in the tribunal of penance. Amen.

II.—ON THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

Jesus and His apostles have taught us in the gospel that each of us will be judged in particular at the hour of death, and that mankind shall be judged in general on the last day, at the end of time; and whenever we say the Apostles' Creed, we make a profession of faith in that doctrine. We believe that Jesus, who has finished the great work of our redemption, and who has ascended into heaven, will descend from the right hand of His Father, where He is now

seated, to judge the living and the dead on the great and general judgment day. It is called the general judgment day, because after Christ shall have raised mankind from the dead, they shall appear before Him to be judged.

St. Thomas gives three reasons for the necessity of this universal judgment. 1st. Man, as a particular individual, answered alone and to God only, and was judged in particular at the hour of his death, and then he only knew the justice of God, and the equity of God's sentence on himself individually; but as a public person, and one constituting a part of society, it is fit that he should be judged before all men, in order that he may know the justice and equity of God towards all other men as well as to himself. 2nd. As the body of each person contributed with the soul to offend or glorify God, it follows that it should be rewarded or punished as well as the soul; but as this did not happen at death, it follows that it should happen at the general judgment. 3rd. The holy doctor says that there ought to be a public or general judgment to justify the conduct of God upon men, to make known His providence, His mercy, His truth, the triumph of His grace, and to display before the congregated world the virtues of the just, their innocence, their good works, and the sanctity of their lives, and also to make known the crimes of the reprobate, their public scandals, their criminal desires, their shameful and most hidden actions, and, finally, to manifest and confound the rash and unjust judgments of others on the conduct of innocent persons.

How should we consider this day of general judgment? We should consider it a day for the manifestation of all things—1st. Because Christ will make Himself known in this judgment. 2nd. Because He will make all men known. 3rd. He will make known the nothingness of this world. 4th. He will make the world see the accomplishment of all His designs upon men. We will now consider each of those points.

1st. How will Jesus make Himself known? Jesus is known by a very small number of persons in this world, and even those know Him very imperfectly, although the knowledge of Him is the fountain of all their happiness; because the love of earthly things darkens and deadens their hearts and souls, and hence St. Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians, says: "The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the spirit of God."[1] We do not wish to study a subject calculated to humble us because we are distracted by

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

many occupations, and we are devoted to many and useless sciences which fill the soul with pride and vanity. Jesus does not entirely discover Himself now in order to exercise our faith; but on the last day all men will see Him just as He is; and hence those Jews and Gentiles, heretics and Christians, who opposed His divinity, His humanity, and His other mysteries, will then see and thoroughly comprehend who He is.

Then they will not have obscurities, darkness, and false reasons to support their errors touching Him; but, on the contrary, they will see this Son of Man invested with great power and majesty. All the glory of this world shall be eclipsed before Him, and all that ever appeared great and grand in it will appear stripped of their pomp and brilliancy in His presence. All men shall know Him and will be confounded and humbled in His sight; and hence holy David says: "The Lord shall be known when He shall execute judgment."[1] "They shall look upon Him whom they pierced."[2] They shall see Him as the Messiah whom they expected, and whom they rejected. The Nestorians, the Arians, the Sabellians, and all other heretics, will be obliged to acknowledge Him as the true God, consubstantial and co-eternal with the Father, true God and true man; and all sinners who trampled Him and His law under foot, and who persecuted and put Him to death, must confess in Him on that day; and this true Joseph will say to them: You have sold me into Egypt. What a terrible agony will lacerate their hearts when they hear those significant and crushing words, when they find themselves in the presence of Him whom they had despised in life, and who is now going to judge them. This divine Judge, Jesus Christ, will then make known to them His justice, His power, His mercy, and His love, His blessings, and the abundant means given for ther conversion and salvation, the mysteries operated in their favour, the sacraments which he bequeathed to them, and, in addition, He will make them understand all He is and all He has. "When the Son of God," says St. Augustine, "came upon earth, He hid the majesty of His Divinity under the veil of our humanity, in order not to dazzle us by His splendour whilst drawing us to Him by the bonds of His charity; but at His second coming He will make all His divine splendour and majesty appear entirely unveiled." This light, so far from comforting the reprobate, will serve rather to confound and plunge them into a terrible despair, and to the elect it will be a source of joy and happiness.

[1] Psalms, ix. 17. [2] John, xix. 27.

2nd. Jesus will make clear and manifest on the last day all the acts, the feelings, and the inclinations of mankind. Each individual must appear as he really shall be, and mankind must see him in the same undisguised condition, in order that each may see and comprehend the equity of the judgment of Jesus. On that day Jesus will manifest the sanctity of the elect, their piety, and all the good works they performed, and which they concealed from the eyes of men. Then all those who lived buried in deserts, and hidden from all except God, shall appear invested with immortality and glory. Then all those Christians who appeared during life like trees in winter, stripped of their beauty, shall appear, says St. Paul to the Colossians, "with Christ in glory when He shall appear."[1] This day shall be the spring-time of the just, and then sinners shall see that the lives of those people were hidden in God with Jesus Christ. All worldlings, the impious, and other sinners who regarded the lives of those Christians as folly who lived according to the gospel, and who crucified their flesh and mortified their passions, all these shall see such penitents placed with honour amongst the children of God. Those unfortunate sinners will discover on that day the innocence and uprightness of so many just whom the calumnies and the malice of their enemies so often misrepresented and oppressed in this world; and on that day all persecutors, tyrants, and slanderers, shall be confounded by the beauty and brilliancy of those they endeavoured to crush and obscure. Not only shall the just be made manifest on the last day, but sinners as well, because many things hinder us now from knowing ourselves. The ignorance and forgetfulness in which we live, the little reflection we make on what passes within us, the flatteries and false praises which men give us, so dazzle us as to make us believe that we are all and more than they tell us; but on the last day we shall see and know ourselves, because we shall be exposed to the view of the world, as nothing can be hidden, and all veils must be removed on that day.

As Adam hid his shame with leaves of trees, so, too, we can hide our crimes in this world; but on the last day all sins hidden through shame or hypocrisy, voluntary forgetfulness, ignorance, and negligence, and all sins of omission, shall be manifested before congregated mankind; and hence the prophet Nahum says: "I will discover thy shame to thy face, and I will show thy nakedness to the nations, and thy shame to kingdoms."[2] Sins committed through culpable ignorance shall be made known; and hence kings, pastors, judges,

[1] Coloss. iii. 4.

[2] Nahum, iii. 5.

magistrates, fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses, superiors, and all who shall have neglected the duties of their state, shall have all their culpable omissions and neglect publicly manifested, because this ignorance will not excuse them, and because they could easily discover it, and ought to know their obligations to God and to themselves; but, instead of doing so, they lived in culpable neglect, and hence fell into many and considerable sins. Jesus will also make known all sins forgotten through a bad examination of conscience, and this bad examination arises because many persons in this world voluntarily blind themselves, and because they do not wish to have their sins before them, and they feel most happy to forget them in order not to be tormented by remorse on account of them.

But on this great accounting day, God will release those sins from the prison of their hearts, where they lay so long enchained, and He will place them before the eyes of those who had forgotten them. All their thoughts and most secret desires, all the criminal designs which they conceived in their inmost bosom, all their dishonest looks and scandalous words, all their calumnies, slanders, and detractions; all their blasphemies and every useless word and act of theirs, all shall be examined and made public on that most thrilling occasion. Not only shall the sins be made manifest, but the number of them, their consequences, the scandals they had caused, the most hidden and most shameful, and all the exaggerating circumstances in connection with them. Jesus will not only examine if we violated the just right of others, but He will examine if we have given alms, and soforth besides. We must give an account of the sins of others as well as of our own, because we will be examined about the sins which others committed through our fault, by our persuasion, our permission, or our authority.

There are certain states of life in which it is almost impossible to be saved, because persons are forced to obey the commands of those to whom they are subject. Children frequently sin on account of their parents, and domestics on account of their masters; some people sin through the fault or ignorance of their pastors, their kings, their governors, their judges, and those who have dominion over them; and all those who wielded such authority over them shall appear before God—the king and his subjects, the pastor and his flock, the father, the mother, and their children, the master, the mistress, with their servants and dependents; and hence Solomon says: "A most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule."[1] God will demand the

[1] Wisdom, vi. 6.

souls of his subjects from the king, He will demand an account from the pastor of his flock, and from the director an account of those confided to his teaching and instruction; and the blind guide will perish with the blind they guided. We will see all those things through that light and knowledge which God will communicate on that day to each of us, in order that we can clearly see ourselves and all others as well; and He will not reason with sinners in order to convince them of their crimes, because they will be convinced by the dictates of their own consciences.

What is the third thing which Jesus will make manifest on the last day?

He will make the nothingness of this world very clear, because the present lovers of it have only false ideas of it, and regard it as something beautiful, grand, and agreeable; and, thus seduced by their passions, they become attached to it and make it the idol of their affections. But when the day of the Lord shall come, it will be a day of light to undeceive men of their errors and prejudices—a day when Jesus will judge the world for the last time; and He has judged it already upon the cross when He said: "Now is the judgment of the world."[1] He has condemned the pride of worldlings and the lovers of riches and pleasures from the cross, which was the tribunal of opprobrium, poverty, and suffering. He showed the baseness and the nothingness of those things by the contempt in which He held them, and by the malediction He pronounced upon them. And He has made known how terrible this world is, and how its lovers would not comprehend Him. But on the last day all the glories of this world will be eclipsed, and everything in it shall appear before Jesus shorn of its pomp and false glitter, because the prince and his subjects, the priest and his flock, and masters and their servants, shall be mixed up together without rank or distinction, save that which virtue and good works had given them; and hence the prophet Isaias says: "Because the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and high-minded, and upon everyone that is arrogant, and he shall be humbled."[2] "And the loftiness of men shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be humbled, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."[3] Nothing will be great on that day but virtue, poverty of spirit, humility, piety, and the contempt of earthly things.

Worldlings will be shorn of all their grandeur, of all the objects and sources of their pleasures, and of all the goods they possessed;

[1] John, xii. 31. [2] Isaias, ii. 12. [3] Isaias, ii. 17.

they will stand naked in the presence of the Omnipotent, and they shall see this whole earth and the entire universe reduced to cinders, ashes, and ruins. The richest and most brilliant crowns, the sceptres of kings and emperors, gold, silver, pearls, and precious stones, costly furniture, and gorgeous edifices, and all the ornaments of pride and vanity, shall become on that last day the food of an universal and devastating fire, which shall precede and usher in the coming of the eternal Judge, and shall burn up and scorch life out of everything that lives and breathes. We shall see on that day, through a light which God shall infuse into us, that the hearts of worldlings, as we are told in the Apocalypse, "shall become the habitation of demons and the stronghold of every unclean spirit."[1] The reprobates shall manifest externally the rage and despair that devour them internally. God will place the Babylon of this world on one side, and the heavenly Jerusalem on the other; the world with her crimes and injustices on one side, and on the other piety with her virtues and good works. The latter shall be the object of God's complacency, and the former the victim of His eternal hatred and vengeance. All men and angels will admire the beauty and the grandeur of the celestial Jerusalem, and they shall regard the Babylon of this world with loathing and disgust, because she will bear upon her forehead and on her heart the character and impress of the beast.

This holy city will not appear to us on that last day embellished in the proud pomp and ephemeral grandeur of worldlings, because all her beauty consists in her good works, her charity, her humility, her patience, her meekness, and her splendid forbearance. She will be encompassed with the glory of God Himself, and adorned with the merits of Jesus, with which He, her spouse, hath invested her; and if we compare the piety and virtue of this holy city with the evanescent false glories of this world, we must admire and love the first and hate and despise the latter.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, OUR JUDGE ON THE LAST DAY.

I believe, my adorable Jesus, that you have been established the Judge of the living and the dead, because you have received from your Father all the power, the wisdom, the light, and the justice which are necessary to exercise the last and general judgment on mankind. I am filled with fear and trembling when I reflect on all

[1] Apoc. xviii. 2.

the circumstances of this judgment, and on all that is to happen on that last day. On that occasion you will not appear as you have been on this earth, encompassed with opprobrium and a subject of weakness and insult; no, but you will appear invested with a glory most brilliant, a power invincible, and a majesty infinitely grand and beautiful. You will not fly then from men seeking to destroy you, but you will make them feel and know that you are a powerful and terrible God, a God of vengeance, the very God who produced them and us from nothingness; the God who so long sustained this world, and who will destroy it on the last day.

Then, indeed, we shall clearly see that you are the only true and living God. Oh, Lord Jesus, who can stand that day in your presence? Who can tranquilly gaze on your cross and the other ensigns of your judgment? I shall be on the small number on your right hand, or amongst the countless and ghastly crowd on your left. On that day everything will be clear and distinct, because the terrible separation will be made, and the good will no longer be confounded with the wicked, nor the sheep with the goats, nor the chaff with the grain, nor the cockle with the good seed. O my Jesus, what sentence will you pronounce on those two classes of persons? We know that your sentence will be irrevocable and your decree eternal and without an appeal. St. Matthew tells us that you will say to the wicked on your left: "Depart from me, you accursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels."[1] You did not love me, and now I do not love you; an impassable gulf shall eternally separate you from me, you shall never again be the objects of my mercy or pity.

I shall remember and preserve you only to punish you as objects of my offended justice; you shall be tortured for ever in never-consuming flames; your inclinations will turn you continually to me, but the load of your crimes will soon draw you down into the horrible abyss. It is now too late to be convinced of the good you have lost, because there is no more time, no more graces, no more means left to repair the past; you have nothing now but a cruel remorse, which, like a never-dying worm, shall gnaw your conscience for ever. Depart from me and my angels, your sins shall always be before you, your associates shall be demons, who will torture you and charge you with your crimes. Your bodies, the companions and accomplices of your sins, are now united to your souls, and both shall burn for eternity in a fire which never will be mitigated or extinguished.

[1] Matt. xxv. 41.

Everything will contribute to torment you in this fiery abode—the recollection of the past shall lacerate your ungrateful hearts, the present will punish you, and the memory of the future will keep you in a perpetual despair.

O my Jesus, how I tremble when I call to mind the many times I justly deserved the sentence of the wicked and their eternal punishment as well, and how I have not done all or half of what I should do to avoid them. O my merciful Saviour, I am sorely afflicted at the uncertainty of being placed on your right hand on the last day, and of hearing from your divine lips those comforting and delightful words mentioned in St. Matthew: "Come, you blessed of my Father, and possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."[1]

Come, for your evils are all over, your battles are all won, and your sufferings are all ended. Come and rejoice in the same happiness I enjoy; my glory and my inheritance shall be yours for ever. I shall present you to my Father, and you and I shall dwell for ever in His bosom. Then, my adorable Saviour, you will take all your elect and transport them into heaven, whilst the reprobates shall be precipitated, with the devils who tempted them, into the fiery caverns of the damned. Time will then be ended for ever, everything shall have passed away, the heavens and the earth will be hidden in your presence; and you and your elect, united as members to their chief, shall begin to chant the canticle of your mercies for ever. How zealously I should labour, my Jesus, to be on the small number of your elect, and nothing should appear too hard or too difficult to win this ineffable good. I will suffer everything, my Jesus, and I shall do all possible violence to my nature and to my passions in order to achieve this happy end. Amen.

[1] Matt. xxv. 34.

FOURTH INSTRUCTION.

ON JESUS, CONSIDERED IN HIS QUALITIES OR CONNECTION WITH THE BLESSED IN HEAVEN.

As we have considered what Jesus is to His Church on earth, it is fit to know what He will be to her for eternity in heaven; and hence we must elevate our thoughts above this earth, and transporting ourselves in spirit into paradise, we will strive, through the eyes of faith, to learn a little of what Jesus is in the heavenly Jerusalem. Nothing can be grander, more admirable, or more holy, than what St. John says about that glorious city and of its inhabitants, the saints, of which city Jesus is the founder and the architect. Those saints are the living stones of this city, all are animated with the spirit of God, penetrated with His glory, illumined with His light, and burning in His love, all united in one without envy or dissension, each occupying the place in which his Sovereign Architect had placed him, having no other law than holy charity, and the spirit of Jesus which emanates from Him as chief, and which fills each of the blessed according to the measure proper for Him. All the inhabitants of this city are kings and queens, and all participate in the glory and in the inheritance of the only Son of God. Jesus is the gate of this city, which is open to the four quarters of the world, and through whom all the elect enter, from the east, the west, the north, and the south. There is no entrance except through Jesus, and for those only who are marked with His cross. The gates of this city are never closed, because its inhabitants do not apprehend any surprise from their enemies, who are chained to beds of fire down far away in hell. In this blessed city the saints will have no more battles to fight against their former enemies, the world, the devil, and the flesh, because those enemies will be for ever subjugated, and those holy citizens of Sion will enjoy a peace, happy and undisturbed for ever.

How do the saints regard Jesus in heaven?

All the saints know Him, acknowledge Him, and adore Him as the author, the principle, and the source of all their sanctity and

happiness; they place their crowns with joyous accord at His feet, and they regard all the good works they ever performed as emanating from His grace and bounty. Far from attributing the merit of anything they did to themselves, they are continually acknowledging His goodness, and chanting before His throne the canticle of praise and thanksgiving mentioned in the Apocalypse, saying, "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction."[1] They have the crucified Jesus always before their eyes, adoring Him as the author and the consummator of their sanctity and happiness, both of which He merited for them by His death. They find all their glory, their felicity, their joy, their peace, and their light, in Jesus, their Chief, their King, and their Father, and they are continually thanking Him for their redemption, the remission of their sins, and for their salvation.

What is the sun that enlightens this city?

St. John says in the Apocalypse: "This city hath no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof."[2] There is neither night or darkness in this holy city of God, and all figures and shadows are there unveiled, and truth and light are all its beauty. Jesus is the sun and the lamp which enlightens it; and this sun of justice, this marvellous lamp, shall never go down or be extinguished. This light of uncreated truth shall blaze on through eternity to illumine the saints, and to discover to them the treasures of God's wisdom and science hidden in Jesus. Then they will see the paths by which He conducted them and the means He used to save them; they will see why He sometimes permitted them to fall, and how those very falls contributed to their salvation by intensifying their penitential grief and regret. This divine light will never leave them in ignorance of anything calculated to make them delighted and happy. There they will have no need of faith to believe in the divine mysteries, because in Jesus, and in His light, they can clearly see them in their principle, their means, and their end.

Who is the priest, the victim, and the temple in this holy city?

St. John, who was transported by an angel into a high mountain, where he saw this holy city, says in the Apocalypse: "And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof and the Lamb."[3] The bosom of the Divinity is the temple where Jesus dwells, and He is Himself the temple where all the saints

[1] Apoc. v. 12. [2] Apoc. xxi. 23. [3] Apoc. xxi. 22.

have their eternal dwelling-place. He discharges the office of priest in the bosom of His Father, where He offers Himself as a holy sacrifice, and as the Lamb immolated from the beginning of the world. He is always in His Father, and is offering Himself in His presence to Him as the victim of the Church of heaven and of earth; and offering, at the same time, with Himself and in Himself, all the saints in heaven. Therefore, let us adore Jesus as the priest, the victim, and the temple of the celestial city. He is the temple brilliant with heavenly grandeur; the priest invested with immortality and glory; the victim once dead, but now living for ever in the presence of His Father. He is the temple in which God shall be eternally praised and adored by the saints dwelling in it. He is the priest who will eternally bless the elect, and who will consecrate and offer them up to His Father. He is the victim in whom God will find the accomplishment of all His designs and His justice fully satisfied.

Do the saints in heaven regard Jesus as their mediator?

The saints in heaven do not require a mediator to appease God's anger, to obtain the remission of sin, or to intercede for them, because their reconciliation is effected for ever, because they have entered into an impeccable existence, and because they have achieved that consummated justice from which they can never fall. But Jesus will be the channel between them and God, and through Him all their praises and adorations shall pass. He shall be to them *that angel of the great council* who will carry the prayers of the saints before the throne of the omnipotent God, and through Him the angels will praise, adore, and bless God through ages of ages. Everything in heaven is done by the ministration of Jesus; He is the first minister of God's house, and no one can approach the great King except through His mediation, because God always regards Him as the divine being in whom He has centered all His affection, and in whom He has placed the plenitude of His gifts and blessings, in order that He may distribute them by His mediation to whom He wishes, and in whatever manner He may desire. St. John tells us in his Apocalypse that he saw in in this city "a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and in the midst thereof and on both sides of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."[1]

What is this river which waters the holy city, and what is this

[1] Apoc. xxii. 1, 2.

tree of life which is planted therein? The river is Jesus Christ, who is the source of the glory and sanctity of the blessed, because from Him flows that flood of peace and those torrents of delights which bathe the saints in everlasting happiness. They plunge into this river, where they find every joy, comfort, and consolation. They cool their thirst for justice in this river, and find in it all the longings of their desires. They drink from this flood of heavenly delights are always thoroughly satiated, and are never weary or dissatisfied with its sweet and renovating efficacy.

Jesus is also the tree of life planted in this holy city. He is always in the society of the saints unveiled, and always contributing to their happiness. He nourishes them continually, and never ceases communicating joy, peace, and immortality to them; He makes them His co-heirs, and gives them a part of all He possesses. This tree of life feeds their souls with truth, fills their hearts with charity, and communicates to their resuscitated bodies both incorruption and holiness, and in the fruits of this tree they find the plenitude of every joy, peace, and happiness; and hence St. John says in the Apocalypse: "They shall no more hunger or thirst, neither shall the sun fall upon them, nor any heat,"[1] because they will be nourished with everything Jesus can give them; they will be satiated with His glory, and inebriated with never-ceasing torrents of delights. They will never again fear to be deceived, because they are now drinking at the fountain of all truth; and they will never again feel the heats of criminal assaults, because they are burning in the full blaze of divine love, and they can never again be exposed to the insults or attacks of their enemies, because they possess eternal peace; and hence we read in the Apocalypse that "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall rule them,"[2] shall guide them, shall feed them with celestial manna, and shall never lose sight of them or their comforts.

What is Jesus to the Church in heaven?

He is the spouse of the Church already in heaven, of that portion of it already consummated in a perfect union with Him; but she will not be perfectly formed until the last day, when the marriage feast will be entirely accomplished. Then she will appear without stain or wrinkle, sparkling with delights, invested with glory and the merits of her divine spouse, adorned with His riches and His favours, and washed and made spotless in His blood; because all that the soul and body contained of the old man shall be absorbed in the glories and in the immortal life of the spouse. Then the perfect union of

[1] Apoc. vii. 16. [2] Apoc. vii. 17.

the entire Church with Jesus shall be fully accomplished in a divine union and consummation of the spouse with its spouse, its chief, and its head, Jesus Christ. Everything connected with this marriage feast shall be inconceivably grand and holy, and in every respect worthy of so exalted an alliance, because the lamb will be both the feast and the bridegroom, all the saints will be both the spouses and the guests, and the completion of their glory will be to be transformed into the bosom of the divinity.

The rejoicings at this wedding shall have nothing profane, because everything there shall be most holy and divine, shall give glory to God, and all shall love Him, and sing His praises and mercies for ever; and what will still more intensify the glories of this never-ending holiday is, that it will never be interrupted by the slightest strife, or darkened by the least grief or sadness. The divine spouse, Jesus, shall find His spouse always amiable, and she shall be the eternal object of His infinite love. Their society shall never be disturbed, and they will converse for ever on the grandeur and the mercies of God, and the virgins, by a privilege peculiar to themselves, "shall follow the Lamb wheresoever He goeth." And on account of this grand privilege, they will be endowed with a more brilliant glory than the other saints, and still those saints will not feel humbled at this distinction, because each must be fully content and happy, since He possesses God Himself—all he could desire.

What is Jesus to the saints at present in heaven?

He is all things to them, because they find all their happiness in Him as their chief; and hence St. Paul says to the Colossians: "In Him it hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell;"[1] and, therefore, from Him, as from an inexhaustible source, flows all that is necessary for the salvation of men, and for the felicity of the elect as well. He has the plenitude of grace and truth, which He communicates to men in order to sanctify them. He possesses the plenitude of glory, light, sanctity, and science; the plenitude of charity, life, and immortality; the plenitude of joy and peace; the plenitude of the divinity, the priesthood, and royalty; and when the blessed are consummated in a perfect union with Him, they will possess all these plenitudes.

They will be glorified in the glory of their chief, illumined in His light, sanctified in His sanctity, living in His life, inflamed with His love, immortal as Himself, inebriated with His joy, absorbed in the delights of His peace, participators in His royalty and in His priest-

[1] Coloss. i. 19.

hood, and, in a certain sense, made divine in Him. But when Jesus, who is now all things to the saints in heaven, shall have formed at the end of time all the members of His mystic body, then, as St. Paul says in his first epistle to the Corinthians: "When all things shall be subdued unto Him, the Son also Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."[1] Then God shall reign by Himself in the unity of His essence and in the trinity of the divine persons, and He will make the whole body of the Church, both the chief and the members, live and subsist in Him and with Him, and to adore, to love, and to bless Him for ever and ever.

EJACULATION TO JESUS, ON WHAT HE IS TO THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

When I contemplate you, my adorable Jesus, in this heavenly city, of which you are the architect and all the beauty, I am filled with a profound admiration, and I feel an ardent desire growing in me to become at any cost a citizen of it; but I know that I never can accomplish this happiness unless I live a stranger and an exile here on earth, always longing after this glorious dwelling-place, never permitting the things here below to interrupt my aspirations, and using the things of this world only when necessary, and as if using them not. I know that I never can be one of those living stones with which you are erecting this holy city, unless I suffer with patience to be shaped with the hammer of affliction, humility, outrage, and contempt.

I shall not be permitted to adore you with the saints, you who art the author and the principle of their sanctity, if I have not acknowledged you on earth as the author and the consummator of my faith and justice, and, therefore, we should despise this earth, and regard all the things of this world as most unworthy of our love and aspirations, when we think on the great things you have in store for us in the heavenly Jerusalem. Seated on the banks of the river Babylon, I must look with compassion on all who drink of its waters, and neglect the living waters which flow through your holy city. My soul thirsts after those waters of life, and I long to drink of them, so that I may be inebriated with their ineffable delights.

But alas! my dear Redeemer, I still abstain, and my heart does not yearn for this happiness with sufficient ardour, because I still drink too deeply of the false sweets of this world, and because I am

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 28.

not sufficiently hungry and thirsty for justice, nor for the fruit of that tree of life which you have planted in paradise. Infuse into me, dear Jesus, this blessed hunger and thirst, in order that all my desires may be satiated and filled with you.

O life incorruptible, immutable, and immortal, always tranquil, always holy and glorious, when shall I possess you? When shall the life I spend here below be finished—a life crossed by a thousand different visitations, and never exempt from the danger of losing Thee. O my Jesus, as you have the keys of life and death, finish very soon this life of mine.

Throw open to me your holy and magnificent temple, that I may see the august sacrifice of yourself and your elect which you offer up with such majesty, sanctity, silence, and respect. You are the high priest of this temple. Your angels are its ministers, and its ceremonies are holy and real. All there adore the Lamb immolated from the beginning of the world, and they make it resound with the glorious canticle: "Benediction, glory, honour, power, wisdom, and divinity to Him who is seated on the throne of the Lamb," and all the choirs of angels never cease singing this adorable chant: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of armies." But, Lord, the victim is not yet complete, nor will it be till time is no more, when you shall have fully acquired the kingdom for your Father, and when you have reunited all the elect to you as their chief and head.

Then when their bodies have risen, and when their souls are reunited to them, and when both are invested with incorruption and immortality, you shall offer all to your Father. When the Church of the elect shall be entirely consummated in an ineffable union with her spouse, and when He and she are consummated in a similar union with God, then the perfect marriage feast of the Lamb will be celebrated. O my God, be all things to me here, that you may be all to me in heaven, and that, at the end of time, I may be on the number of those to whom you will be all in all in the unity of your essence and in the Trinity of the divine persons. Amen.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Page 44, 15th line from bottom, read "grace *for us* to conquer," &c.
Page 78, 17th line from bottom for "above" read "alone."
Page 100, last line, read "hence have a part *not only* in His inheritance," &c.
Page 101, 1st line, omit the word "not."
Page 110, 5th line from top, for "heirs" read "heroes."
Page 157, 19th line from bottom, for "sacred" read "second."
Page 279, 21st line from top, for "sheets" read "shuts."
Page 316, 16th line from top, for "cured" read "cursed."
Page 318, 9th line from top, for "creats" read "creates."
Page 379, 3rd line from bottom, for "His" read "its."
Page 399, 3rd line from top, for "eternal" read "external."

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TITLE